Sulfur 35

ROBERT DUNCAN ON CHARLES OLSON
POETRY BY GARY SNYDER, BARBARA MOR,
GUSTAF SOBIN, ANTONIN ARTAUD & JAYNE CORTEZ
JED RASULA: GENDERING THE MUSE

SHAMAN DRUM BOOKSHOP

313 SOUTH STATE STREET
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48104
(313) 662-7407

We are a specialist bookshop with an extensive, continually expanding selection of quality titles for scholars in the humanities. We shelve a carefully chosen selection of recent and standard titles in poetry, anthropology, religious studies, literary criticism, philosophy, and classical and medieval studies, from American and European presses.

HOURS: Monday through Friday, 10 a.m.---5:30 p.m.
Saturday, 10 a.m.---4:30 p.m.

SULFUR magazine has its main offices c/o English Department, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197 (telephone: 313/483-9787). New York Editorial Office: 202 West 10 St., New York, NY 10014. Subscriptions are $14 (2 issues) for individuals, $20 for institutions. Current issue #35 is Vol. XIV, #2. Single issues are $9.00. Foreign subscriptions, including Canada, add $4.00 for book rate mail or $10 for air mail. Make checks payable to SULFUR in *U.S. Currency Drawn on U.S. Bank.* Back issues (except for #1, #15, #17, #19, and #22) are available. CLAIMS FOR MISSING NUMBERS will be honored only within 3 months after publication. No unsolicited manuscripts will be returned unless accompanied by SASE. ISSN #: 0730-305X. *Sulfur* is indexed by the American Humanities Index.

Copyright © SULFUR 1994

COVER DESIGN AND TYPOGRAPHY BY BARBARA MARTIN
TYPESETTING BY LAZERTYPE, SANTA ROSA, CA

Distributed by Bernard DeBoer, Inc.; Small Press Distribution; Inland; Ubiquity; & Spectacular Diseases, England

FALL 1994

A LITERARY BI-ANNUAL OF THE WHOLE ART

Editor	CLAYTON ESHLEMAN
Contributing Editors	RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS MICHAEL PALMER ELIOT WEINBERGER PAMELA WYE
Correspondents	CHARLES BERNSTEIN JAMES CLIFFORD CLARK COOLIDGE JAYNE CORTEZ MARJORIE PERLOFF JED RASULA JEROME ROTHENBERG KEITH TUMA ALLEN S. WEISS MARJORIE WELISH
Managing Editor	CARYL ESHLEMAN
Editorial Assistant	KEN CORMIER

Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan

C O N T

5 **BENJAMIN FRIEDLANDER:** Six Poems

9 **GARY SNYDER:** Reeds

13 **HEATHER RAMSDELL:** *from* Bridge Segments

26 **BARBARA MOR:** Linguistic Duplex

50 **ANTONIN ARTAUD:** *from* Interjections (Tr. from the French by Clayton Eshleman, with Bernard Bador)

62 **ROBERT HERSHON:** The German Lunatic

65 **GUSTAF SOBIN:** Undulant-Oblique

70 **PAMELA WYE:** Amy Sillman: Karmic Kabob

72 **AMY SILLMAN:** Six Gouaches

78 **ROBERT DUNCAN ON CHARLES OLSON** (Introduced & Edited by Robert Bertholf)

ROBERT DUNCAN: As An Introduction (1972)

ROBERT DUNCAN: Eleven Letters to Charles Olson

119 **LINDSAY HILL:** Four Poems

123 **ANDREW JORON:** Peculiar Roots Have Reason's Eyes

124 **GUSTAF SOBIN:** Two Odes

131 **JEAN-PAUL AUXEMERY:** Xenias (Tr. from the French by Charlotte Mandell)

139 **RIKKI DUCORNET:** *from* Phosphor in Dreamland

E N T S

144 **RIKKI DUCORNET:** Six Drawings

150 **JAYNE CORTEZ:** Three Poems

156 **INGEBORG BACHMANN:** Two Poems (Tr. from the German by Peter Filkins)

159 **JED RASULA:** Gendering the Muse

176 **REVIEWS AND NOTICINGS:** Bertholf on reviewing Duncan; Byrd on Stein; Maud on Fredman; Perloff on Penberthy, Yip and La Barbara; Featherston on Shurr's Dickinson; Gander on Damon; Bernstein on British Poetry; DuPlessis on Mackey, Hejinian, and Blaser; Tuma on Mayer; Blankfort on *For Palestine;* Lamborn Wilson on Orientalismo; Murphy on Adorno; Weiss on 18th-Century French Revivals; Metcalf on Melville and Lucien Freud; Coolidge's Noticings

250 **CONTRIBUTOR NOTES**

COVER: COLLAGE BY BERNARD BADOR

1994 issues of *Sulfur* are made possible in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, The English Department, and The World College of Eastern Michigan University.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

BullHead

2205 Moore Street • Ashland, Kentucky 44101

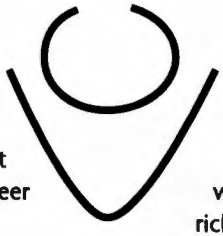
Literature of Poetry & Myth is available for $5.00 an issue.

**Only 12 issues will be published:
two and sometimes three times a year.
A subscription for all twelve issues is $50.00**

BullHead #1

(available now)
features poetry & prose about Ohio's Great Serpent Mound, now in danger from real estate developers.

antler, barbara
mor, stephen ellis
dennis formento
thomas crow, joe
bruchac, david romtvedt
carroll arnett, bobbie greer
mary laird, karl young



clayton
eshleman, leonard
cirino, ann filemyr
alex gildzen, harold
wright, john tritica, ken
warren, will inman, brian
richards, ed. by joe napora

BullHead #2, featuring mor & eshleman, available summer '94

In anger, I wrote and mailed a STATEMENT to a number of people which was based upon a transaction that I had with Arundel Press and Mr. Phillip T. Bevis. Although this STATEMENT was sent out with the *Sulfur* return address, I was not acting in my capacity as editor of *Sulfur* magazine nor in my capacity as Professor of English at Eastern Michigan University; I was acting on my own behalf.

I have settled my differences with the above parties and I hereby retract all allegations made therein.

—Clayton Eshleman

BENJAMIN FRIEDLANDER

SIX POEMS

this is the fairy handle
cranking alchemical chocolate
downwind of the factory
where the gold bars
are chewed
slowly

world shaking mirage making
gold pudding
shook off like thunder
pit marked depths
of the rainbow

I am a leprechaun
dark as not
eyeless as the worm
dangling o'er the pot

*

cast out his son
to gather up the salt
dissolved in the fresh dimension
diamonds are the pleasure-
seeker's wake of,
raising his nets
carbonized like sugar,
or let up by the chain
of command,
to see gleaming this vehicle
for emotion, its cabin lights
an amber that some
Neptune or Lucifer
turns in his hands

*

HOLDING A PENCIL

the pincer's vice has
the prince of darkness
gripping
his nether parts

the lock I pull the chain to
so tired
roused from bedsheets
uninspired

a thing so putrid
must be meat
this rough sketch of inattention
hanging from a sleeve

ANTHEMIC

Corrosive, you—poets—
allied,
a chorus to your laughter,
I—

sung dispassionate recusal,
a fallacy
administers the world,
lapidarian—stained—

a gold obliquity
debased
arrays sedition—
O carry me away

*

WHY I AM NOT. . .

you can't get cow's milk
from a sow's heart
nor hear
the lowering of the boom

eating the tongue
of proclivity
with pursed lips grimaced
and paying for the pleasure

the appetite of meat,
sharpened,

and the toothless meat
of hunger, solaced

*

POEM

Contradiction
makes a knot
and keeps the rope
from slipping through our fingers

I was a fish
by my tail turned
tight to the fisted
seaweed nomenclature

It was sped up experimentally
on the page, this indecision
that binds us to an action
that doesn't happen

*

GARY SNYDER

REEDS

"Why should we cherish all sentient beings?
Because sentient beings
are the roots of the tree-of-awakening.
The Bodhisattvas and the Buddhas are the flowers and fruits.
Compassion is the water for the roots."

—Avatamsaka Sütra

I *A Beach in Baja*

". . .on the twenty-eighth day of September 1539, the very excellent Señor Francisco de Ulloa, lieutenant of the Governor and captain of the armada by grace of the most illustrious Señor Marques de Valle de Oaxaca, took possession of the bay of San Andres and the Bermeja Sea, that is on the coast of this new Spain toward the north, at thirty-three and a half degrees, for the said Marques de Valle in the name of the Emperor our King of Castille, at the present time and in reality,

placing a hand on the sword,
saying, that if anyone contradicts this
he is ready to defend it;
cutting trees with his sword,
uprooting grass,
removing rocks from one place to another,
and taking water from the sea;

all as a sign of possession.
. . .—I, Pedro Palenzia, notary public of this armada, write what happened before me."

II *Kadekaman*
Cadeu Caamanc,
"Creek-reed": San Ignacio

(*aggava,* hawk *aggvacaamanc* creek of the hawks)

Señora Maria Leree is ninety-eight years old
rests in a dark cool room at full noon.
A century-old grapevine covers the house. Casa Leree.
"she still tries to tell me what to do"
—her daughter Rebecca
lived fifty-five years in Los Angeles,

Dagobert drives beer truck all day every day
and some nights,
from Guerrero Negro to San Ignacio.
Says the salt works at Guerrero Negro
sell most of their salt to Japan;

Rebecca plays a mandolin
"I need some music down here."
Dagobert trucks beer to ranches
all through central Baja
over those rutted roads.
"I have six kids in Guaymas. I
Get over to see them three days a month"

South of El Arco
a hummingbird's nest with four eggs;
four Mexican black hawks
a caracara on the top of a cardón
a bobcat crossing the truck track at twilight
a wadi full of cheeping evening birds

Cats walk the fan-palm roof.
Her two sons are painters.
—"I am a poet."
"You came down here to Baja for
—inspiration? Poeta?"

Yes, on these tracks. Rising early.
Dry leather. Deep wells.
Where we breathe, we bow.

III *Eat Your Self*

The bulls of Iberia—Europa loves the Father;
India loves the big-eyed Mother Cow,

In the Thyssen Gallery in Madrid there is a painting by Simon Vouet—"The Rape of Europa"—from about 1640. The white bull is resting on the ground, the woman sweetly on his back. A cheerful scene, two serving women, three cherubs, stand by to help this naked lady and the handsome eager bull. His big eyes are looking up and back, flowers twined around his horns. Modern Europe—

Bony cows of Baja.
Body of grass, forbs, brush, browse.
Dried meat. Charqui "jerky";
(Little church up the arroyo,
Leathery skinny twisted ropy Christ
figure racked to dry)
Quechua *ch'arki;*
dried to keep, good years and bad—

"With this meat, I thee wed"

the MUSCLE dried jerked meat.
the SKIN shoes, saddles, sheaths
the BONES buttons
the FAT buckets of lard
HORNS & HOOVES glue.

Sweet grass breath
loose vulva, droopy udder
bony old cow scratching
horn head on a mesquite limb—
mother *bos*

in her green-grass body at
Arroyo de Camanjue—arroyo of reeds—

(old rancherias called
idelcagomó—creek of the large ranges
cahelulevit—running water
idelibinagá—high mountain
idelabuú—plateau of the mountains)

The elderly ragged bearded vaquero
coming down the track. On his dusty horse.
"Command me!" with elegance.

"Adiós!" with such finality.
"Go with God!"

With this meat I thee feed
with this flesh I thee wed.

HEATHER RAMSDELL

from BRIDGE SEGMENTS

BRIDGE SEGMENT .I

> No bridge is wanted, we now see,
> and bridging is the wrong figure.
> —W.V. Quine

From abutment from
abutment, in a series of angled turns
the path of the circle goes awry.

I keep finding my half on the doorsteps there
where the path, if it is a path, without
formal grip of perspective, too abruptly
arrives. As in the step from a subway.
A plane. In gaudy emergence, want

for a hole through which to go—it's cold
outside—and an eye, an eye and, when it is dark
any light. Anyway to build a way to navigate
to, for the scheme of
the sequence not of footfall, not of running fore-
to-aft, a splicing as in a film, in a string's
acquaintedness—of the ones
to the other ones, for a tryst when we are tired.

It is simple and we are tired
and the plan is clear but a clock
ticking throughout, some
aging occurs, an attrition cannot
be stayed. The fine

progression of cracks.
Dumb sleep is lost

in trajectory.

In the instance of movable parts, x misses y
in countless versions of the episode by fractions, plotted
within the blunt dark, by sextant and ship's
lamp.

There won't be the closure of books and hands
laid on the table. There was no speeding drum,
not a flag, not a map. It has no legend, and its keys,
I assume, are in the river. There is no bottom.
There is no perimeter, there is nothing if not surface
baldness and its continuous arrangement

which is, exactly, the field.

To call it a prison was mean of them.

Outside, there is no center, between
the dark ground, the dark sky,
at the line difference was no wall
to escape, having already left everything
behind but the task of lunging quickly
toward, where else
is there to go, Remember

the stillness of the arc traced
by the falling away of the bodies
which cannot be followed
on foot. They were not just figures.

BRIDGE SEGMENT .2

Then and then a line began but an arrow ensued as drawn
[without ends

whilst once in the event, before the book fell

during winter, at the same time as morning broke and henceforth

the only apt moment passing in orderly parade a dot

and and delay

the day after that, a delay, at an instant when she was young, the instance, suddenly, suddenly, thus

flags of the parted curtain

for the moment, taut with emergency, at a juncture in slow motion, formerly, these days, often June between the hours of 9 and 2 at ages 25 through 61, in 1993, a light-year, as they waited the day before yesterday when the phone rings, a season ago

ago, when the satellite finally lost its gravity late last week in an eventual

of horizon unmodulated by moment

vanishing dot at a subsequent

over end yet-to-land, to an interval, already hours eons later, one calm second, an epoch sunset lapsing in perpetuity if, after the last of the future in a minute on a Thursday as the day is long, for the past.

Diagrams lay over hers.

BRIDGE SEGMENT .2

Did I say Thursday? I meant June,
how odd.

A tooth
in a glass
of milk,

a missing
tooth.

BRIDGE SEGMENT .3

A book is on a ledge, its message may not be delivered
intact, on time, or arrives wearing knowledge as wig and badge.

The typographer said a missing dot
in the pattern of dots was sad

as when a subject who impersonated the king
was banished beginning the problem of twos

not to suggest an unbroken pattern as paradise

leading to problems of many, none of them
attached, causing impotence, or seamlessly
configured, causing impotence.

Arrival's scrim is painted so.

With a loupe you may see the small elements—points

where communion breaks, the crazing, the leakage,
gaps, where waste is the platform from which to leap—

keep falling through the mesh. Dear Charles,

I'm fine though not myself
I have but three things to say

in all honesty and alarm the book is on a ledge, it speaks
only of losses in margins, I can't
remember the rest. I'm sorry

there's nobody here by that name.

BRIDGE SEGMENT .4

The door, the door's calm
summary slam. I've forgotten,
if I had ever known, the name for it.
There is grace

in the indivisible brick, and gravity.

Agree, the obvious nerve
strands bunched
cloth against the other

nerves is pressure and
a warmth, not love

exactly—a break in the surface, a lip—a lip

had little to do with the problem of the mouth, not the mashing of a mouth against that mouth because we were glad and bored that day, having already slept and eaten, plenty of water, sandwiches, milk and figs had entered the mouth, living bloods of the body within, small breath in and emitting from the mouth, strings of saliva and, things we found unthinkable eventually scorched through the mouth, an effusion, a dry wind through the slender tube opened a flame in the mouth igniting,

you, it said

you, and a pattern emerged,
solitude

in the body, she is thinking

of a word. I am thinking of a word, you,
in the last row, nod, if you can hear me.

BRIDGE SEGMENT .5

Snow covers the tracks we left, the dogs
couldn't follow from, past the naked trees,
the slopes had little grip we had to run
quickly and with an expression of certainty
into the field, although

there is no clear route, through this field
the way must be made up
while going along there is a sense
of being

near the river blurred
with ice. The sun

is white. The land,
blind by it, the sky is

snow and horizon
impossible. It is impossible

from this far station in the rows
to tell much

of fault. Of who they are but people
some small distance apart, one

chasing, one running
away, when time,

over the flat ice budged, when

all the sound went out,
still running.

The screen goes black
in the tradition of sleep, one
falls, one would first, night

amongst the animals in act
of matter's stark need for fuel

a twig for heat a morsel
on the bone I love you.

We should have been home by now.

There must have been some miscalculation,
a transposition of figure or failure
to cohere, damage in transit, some

falling short of the point as close
by now as the other side, that is
close, but inapproachable.

BRIDGE SEGMENT .6

I'm told the life of the fire was brief
though productive. Soon the fog of such ashes
will soften and cover this too. Such
is the manner of ash, not to be sorted
then restored. Of course this
is the province, however encrusted
in scaffolds, who can say if the boards
are sound—

the water is potable, the air
improved, but the street
has no direction, the street
is littered with vacant gloves
figures, the trees
won't bear resemblance
not a leaf, no further need
of sirens

—whether the bridge was
saved if this place is the right the

same or a viable one or was ever
ours to have failed, to be pardoned for.

I am a tourist. Amongst the indigenous
tourists, unable to offer directions,
motion in the street is inching
steadily toward or away, a clock
ticking throughout. An exit an arrow
at every turn a clock, some aging occurs.

We noticed the passing facades, stacked
of foils and formica, of stonework
and ash, how they hung from the sky
as a sham for the unseemly wards

and cannot be cheered. This is not
what the book said.

Eventually we wandered into the angled streets calling
wherever we ended up most frequently
our homes, our photos kept returning the same
half-open eyes and lopped mouth.

BRIDGE SEGMENT .7

You must wear your identification to be
admitted *in the building at all times*
to be seen to belong, without regard
for the referent face, a sense of figure discerned
as by surveillance, the shutters malfunction
just as the vital face of x upturned.

Who applied to represent themselves?

In an unfair light we are moving
with nauseating speed, either the background
blurs or we blur but the room is a real
room with its attendant rug and door, a series
of arrangement, the random accretions.

A chair has no assignment. We
are also composed.
If the clock stopped
the clock wouldn't care. If we're not
the ones we claimed we are—the small
yellowing wouldn't be helped—I am sure
I am real and the others. Our matter
is tolerant, but only prepared
for such blights as can already be imagined.

And the strength of the thread
does not reside in—this isn't the yellow
the fact that some one fibre runs—this
yellow is not realistic, it wants for
form—*through its whole length, but in*
the overlapping of many fibres. Memory

coaxed from odd threads of the subsequent found
on a historian's lapel in a sterile bag on a rack of

like bags is a question.

Who was last to leave, which one drew
the curtain aside, did the couple,
heard laughing in the room above, run, where
was the she last seen, did the hand?

What did the hand?

Who was really the last to leave? The lights
stayed on, the films grew very clear.

BRIDGE SEGMENT .8

Some agreed to trade their grief for a larger one.

A carrot grows
tiresome, a misery flies
out by moments.

It becomes possible to attend
the banquet wearing char-clothes and be mere,
the one near the door, of an ilk in a room of others.

A stain as large as the shirt would go unquestioned.

Sufficiencies, shouts, base laughter arise
with the same uncivilized grace of a fox,
run, laughing away with the bird.
Men the profound finally comes
to surface it refers to little trips
to the store for milk with modesty
as of milk, inch-meal, a light bulb is
exchanged for light meaning the light
at the edge of a table says the same
amount as a face/as the sound of a kicked
shard in the street/as a sentence. The verso
of a violin, having lost its front is sold
for five dollars and fifty cents denoting
a music composed as an instrument to hurl
at passers-by, a song called Please which goes if
if and thus thus, and sings, The Masters sing
there is no act but music, all good, and
free wine for everyone, free
laughter from the floor above, footsteps
as of excited preparation, many days, elsewhere
the custom is drinks for an hour, fights
for an hour, tears for an hour, elsewhere
only tears, or the custom is tea
without comment, a common laugh

seems at first to delay the memorial
service, then trucks go over steel
palettes in the street, an air conditioner
stops then stops relieving us
of the future, Please do not
force the evidence, we'll respond
to no questions beginning with *I*, why
all the resuscitation, the long faces
and decline, let go of this. The end

note resonates until the song
gets taken up again, a dirge,

BRIDGE SEGMENT .9

A curtain
left open, the curtain
is open, no

circle discovered in dust-free conditions
or circular mirror in which
to collect the face by piece

that one eventual shard would
drive sense through all the prior

ends, an arc, for a time, that arm
goes casting out toward

as a body in motion tends toward

a certain point, the possible dividing
itself from the case.

As river; the river.

Frankness is in its brown
surface, radiant
waves where the stone went

extend to the far edge of
leaving

clarity's fine dream of
crashing into a wall

that is as is.

BRIDGE SEGMENT .9A

Heartlessly so the heart
itself is bloodless and a pocket

things are folded in, noumena protrude
there as a sock might from a drawer

and there is a choice to own
the gross bluntnesses of matter

tonight on the precipice
rain.

Seamless wall of the urgent,
Lamp, you cannot be kind.

BARBARA MOR

DUPLEX

du plex Latin double

"A house divided into two living units"

LINGUISTIC

lingua Latin language, tongue

"The science of language; the study of the nature and structure of human speech"

LINGUISTIC DUPLEX

double tongue
/ double talk
tongue double
/ shadow speech
speech shadow
stand-in
doppelganger words

". . . .the stunned headlong certainty that precedes talking in tongues. . . ."

". . . .the stunned headlong certainty that precedes talking in tongues. . . ."

Thomas Pynchon VINELAND 179

Linguistic Duplex
1 — her flowers
2 — calcium
3 — shelter

CALCIUM

a silvery metallic element that occurs in bone, shells, limestone and gypsum, and forms compounds used to make plaster, quicklime, cement, and metallurgic and electronic materials.
atomic number 20
atomic weight 40.08
symbol Ca

L calx lime, limestone Gk khalix pebble

RADIO

the use of electromagnetic waves in the approximate frequency range from 10 kilocycles/second to 300,000 megacycles/second to transmit of receive electric signals without wires connecting the points of transmission and reception
communication of audible signals, such as music, encoded in electromagnetic waves so transmitted and received
transmission of programs for the public by this means; radio broadcast
the equipment used for transmitting of receiving radio signals
adj of or sent by radio of or using oscillations of radio frequency
verb to transmit a message to, or communicate with, by radio

short for RADIOTELEGRAPHY

Latin radix root
Latin radius spoke of a wheel, ray

". . . .the arrangement of Cro-Magnon man's oral and nasal cavities, his longer pharynx—the section of throat just above the vocal cords—and the flexibility of his tongue enabled him to shape and project sounds over a much wider range, and much more rapidly, than early humans could.
His superior vocalizing powers were gained at one big expense, however: modern man is the only creature who can choke to death on food caught in his wind-pipe, because his longer pharynx must do double duty as the route to his alimentary canal."

CRO-MAGNON MAN, Tom Prideaux
The Emergence of Man. Time-Life Books
NY 1973 Time Inc.

1. her flowers

the sounds pass thru our walls big chambers of the heart
we live in bodies as we live in rooms with numbers the street
names of each face in bathroom mirrors and the radio does not
stop at her wall but permutes my membrane sound is more like
blood than anything it pulses in and out of shapes red splash
of music in the street spilled news from a distant hemorrhage
pain crushed cicadas silence
midnight
rubbing legs thighs together are the walls permeable
growing,ruptured petals of,the children explode and blossom
stain of all hearts

her mother came from she came from i came from
earth flesh time

the walls are thin to hear everything. kids scream beyond 3 of
them jump on beds laugh friends 4 more happy sound to be grateful
for the radio is electric nervous thread transgenetic history
stitches her space singing TexMex into my space in single body of
musical air country disco rock mariachi rodeo guitar needles of
dust beer all the machines are drunk outside cruise transam in the
small steep street echotunnel of cottonwood and shadow thick adobe
walls Mexican weekend the boombox occasionally glides by it is not
poetry but all surrounding time space this is our flesh (Aztec
Mayan Irish German)tangled roots,spliced all erupting here
record of flesh mother 3 kids her mother in the other house side
heavy sucked by gravity back to earth recovering breast cancer
surgery chemo keeps the children while her daughter goes to class
nursing credential broken down brown car install beeping siren
when ex-boyfriend ex-husband ex-everything attempts to break inside
the night to sleep weep do some creepy thing between 2 a.m. and
dawn over and over
the siren goes off alone,in the night malfunctions it is lonely

her kids are fine,sweet 5,6 11 she has a daughter on the edge
of exploding petals
i had,have a daughter, daughters i was,she was we were once all
ways those flowers
long ago, the stories go the mother air the song of water walls of
inner dark,cool the bread was made, the walls of hearts the

children jumped up and down,played happy sound
long ago, we hear on the radio

that is from time: genetic codes come from: dial,static,song the
meteor crash Yucatan dinosaur leaves of sacred books burn flesh
piles up in histories as bodies
abducted from one dream dumped in another generations low
rent 8 plastic body bags aluminum beercans in the yard
otherwise exhausted of grass the exhusbands junked Mercury the
exboyfriends threats of serious trouble
they come about 3 a.m. after the bars close drunken baskets of
laundromat shirts pants socks underwear hang in stupors along the
clothesline pinned like no woman ever hung out to dry you know
it is an act of revenge in the morning the ex-man's laundry
like one hundred crows overhung on the sour lines
and they hang there for a week and the ex-boyfriend cocaine
pissed comes by and rehangs them in strange and sinister ways
e.g. pinning 4 shirts together in one place, while pants are
split with one broken, kicked-out frayed leg
dangling now in the dust three weeks of this
and banging on walls shouts screams rocks and full beer cans
thrown at the house predawn phonecalls red swirling splash of
rotating copcar waking the interior walls like nightmare thrown
blood heart attack of the street
and sometime between midnite and dawn he is on the roof stumbling
and stomping drunk and coke high all over the victorian shingles
and this is a language
this is the way they talk

poetry of the exploding body

rages lusts terrors revenges semiotic idiotics wired psychotics
barrio ghetto far hotel suburb quiet neighborhood night
radio men

our children (3) jump and scream to the same machine
the heart is wired to receive everything

and to live here under the same roof is they say a woman in the
world of everywhere is bleeding i live, i lived i will live
poverty of flesh unites us the radio,sound rips interior walls
open we tape, patch glue sew stitch get thru another the
wound opens again like clockwork, of the heart ticking

bombs explode,Ireland Mexico gaslines,cities airplanes messages
on the radio, not here only scattered gunfire of laughter
driving by drunk, post-midnite
of a bullet thru the heart, which was an accident
the kids tell of it next day, click blam spray red flowers
at school

the child is crying why why is the sound of a little girl
blubbering whimpering worse
leaking thru the walls
like a curse of blood the implicit meaning inside some
wallpaper mold blood ink writing time large yellowbrown
stains insects wings thus reading books open
to some discourse
intercourse beer parties firecrackers
night exploding all such red flowers

on the other side i sit inside cool a cool highceilinged spacious
dark room filled with boxes of my books,life and the radio on
timespace acoustic sandwich between
them i am the one in the middle
who makes noise here tatatat a typewriter shoved against their flesh
wall driveby random bullets tatatat a joyride it was an accident
keeps the baby from sleep in the afternoon she is not a baby but
5 years old but she screams tantrums gets revenge (for what?)

(my daughter screamed,writhed from allergies do they scream after
breakfast cereals red road dye caramel color lollipops the one who
was hurt tho didn't scream. one wonders why she didn't scream. we
need to tell them: there is a right to do so)

in the heart of 3 pm street of radio cruise saturdays planet of somewhere
dry times i wish i could type silent as a fly specks the wall with
black indelible feet this attitude appropriate but it is a typewriter
older than all of us Remie Scout original thinker solid crisp as the
poet who sent it to me from his deceased father's memory
"from the same company that makes the rifles!"
he said.
ratatatat a dream-by shouting

and here it comes crackling thru the fine night insect scratching
inside the walls tonight radio television news 1000 miles away? the
blood begins to leak from the stained paper of the walls which do
not stop the flow of sound pulse information weeping agony inside
this big chambered heart of our hearing.night

Petaluma you know the flowers of the mother who is everywhere
so torn and weeping

BOOMBOX: somebody's machine heart

some big machine heart slides slowly down the street of silence
sweat cicadas transam yearning

murdering. of flowers

we are all tuned to it,cannot escape
(deaf, you hear it pounding inside a skull, hemorrhage as seed
rattles,scratches in a box of night vibrations travel along the nerves
who bloom,who sing
the pain in everyone

the heart is dialed to receive her. everything. cannot escape

Polly and 2 friends were playing PERFECT MATCH when Davis appeared
in her room with a knife.
"where are your valuable" he asked
she was the valuable. she showed him her piggy bank with $20
girl-earned dollars

EVIL IS A TRANCE in which he took her from her life with knives
into the darkness drove her telling if they screamed he'd kill
them all.
she was alive he said when police stopped him hidden,nearby in the
bushes Davis says he was "mystified she didn't scream"

(the one who screams on the other side i think of birds in some
jungle some existences are violent like red shrieks of birds flying

upward into green lucid consciousness
but purple,the blood of brutal. mutation of the young)

was she bound and gagged? not bound not gagged? no yes no can't
remember so deranged drugged swollen into monster god can't remember
why she didn't logically scream
out of such terror
(we scream logically upward,birds in flight)

woman in the audience was she strangled of was she stabbed
her father does not listen to the radio no tv news since She is dead,
is all he can say. a sweatshirt with blood on it found whose?
strangled stabbed beaten surely this is America we have a choice

we are mystified the police were mystified listening to the wrong
radio frequency of life/death do not hear the allpoints
bulletin SCREAMING TO ALL POINTS Of THE EARTH

he was mystified we are mystified the parole board let him out
on Parole PAROLE is WORD on his word on the word on words of
over and over let him out 8 years into a 16 years sentence for
doing the same thing MYSTIfIED over and over and over
this is his Word

EVIL is a trance all the psychokillers are among us loose
running in and out of our minds our eyes bleeding from our genital
mouths we open our mouths to scream BUT WE ARE MYSTIFIED WE MAKE
NO SOUND we open our children as wallets to give our flowers
of cherished wealth to robbers we offer our children as
propitiation on the cold autopsy laps of the gods

the young girls Kate and Gillian see him clearly describe him
uncannily the police drawing is frightening in its closeness
to his eyes the police pick him up drunk driving a month later
and do not see it
WE ARE MYSTIFIED THEY DO NOT SEE IT THEY DO NOT SCREAM
the woman calls the police a trespasser on her land she hears
she sees she notices something strange she finds 2 months later
bloody sweatshirt on her land her INSTINCT was clear was so
close to his crime WE ARE MYSTIFIED WE SEE WE HEAR WE SMELL THE
BLOOD Of ATROCITY but we do not scream

on Parole PAROLE is word on his word on the word on words of
experts of GOD he is captured and released and captured and released
and he feels "a warm glow" a "release" of tension
over and over and over

so he wonders why she didn't scream TAKE THE LAW INTO HER OWN
[HANDS
at knife point he'd taken her from her life telling her and 2 friends
that if they screamed he'd kill her mother and her little sister
sleeping in the next room
THAT IF THEY SCREAMED he'd kill them all

and this is his power his power was in the Good Behavior of young girls

NOT TO SCREAM she took in silence his evil thus to spare preserve
flowering these others

(his rage, behind walls swollen purple existential tongue, strangled
impotence inside some skull,wall squirming mind of a psycho killer
always laying back in his prison cell
passive empty masturbatory
with good behavior
is that no matter what he does,she is alive remains living
true beauty innocent brave even in horrid death his inflection
does not deform her it is his face only,always his foetid stink
breathing of himself behind this wall he rots exiled from,denied
(her flowers)

and he is closed up behind a strong wall with all the institutions
of men judge police lawyer parole dictionary god
professionals who Profess words who speak PAROLE the oath of words
to uphold the rule of
to uphold his dick while he does it again and over and again
mystified
she does not scream

why young girls? experts media ask experts answer BECAUSE IT IS
SO EASY so easy bend down rip up handfuls of flowers from such an
earth designated as YOURS

by god the experts the experts claim to know what is Good Behavior

he smirks 200 pounds he is among prisoners cops lawyers judges
parole boards psychosocial workers a big man

2. calcium

the radio speaks machines in one room suffering is another a
thought may scream blood burst wall,pipes root solitude of all throats
they are not heard no one sits with open mouth gagged teeth gone
choked by staring at life screams the machinery tells us is
not heard

he is among (Time) a Big Man

prison)brain of toilets,stench overspill forced anus
torture cells is his home
shit is of the air of his mind he breathes
(flowering)all life as dirtied political
dynamics of male fear they cannot deal with terror of, each
other this realization of *terra* terror testosterone fathers to sons
priests to boys punk factories armies gangs to the alone what
they do,each other over and over closed
up skull,fist groin institutions of groins make BigMen make the
otherWOMAN fuck each other 200 million sperm make A Woman
bleed humiliation he reels a GLOW and
RELEASE this PRISON(lived in a trailer 3rd child of 5 unwanted abused
by father left alone
home of pain(locked,mind)
he is valuable there
wallet,semen testimony muscle hung dick swollen steroids alcohol
dope gods men big,mean as gods wth urge INFLICT)Men MAKE a
WOMAN push in,his fear open her eyes
the victim chosen,weaker given them by(God,men,law reason,custom
as offerings little fingers scratch the hideous itch that
Terror fill up the eyes of earth
TO MAKE A WOMAN she wants it

prison(is numbered,scum EMPTY
alone)they reed him videos of infant sex sodomy on boys pale girls
just as they flower first months of menstrual blood and are
acutely sensitive then to their bodies the
intrusions of alien males and thus (as a child hurt so naked by
shame)he lays back on his bunk fantasizing sour yellow fingers
insert into innocence absence,evil,pain it is the
perfect time
maximization of fear in their eyes to become
female be Punished for it

(the god of Justice swells glows
by thick finger rancid penile projection of a smile,disease
self-disgust BigSickMen fear which can be exorcised into eyes of
flowers
firstblood others
then he is value in prison(avenged) onPain
if he could do it with a dirty knifeblade his sour razor a
beer bottle a rifle his Vietnam bayonet his father's belt buckle
raise welts on her petal flesh if he could do it with the
vomiting tip of nose nosebleed childhood nosebrain stem of a
species which alone lusts to mutilate its young not
food not reproduce another

not reproduce another in her place (he wore a condom)but THE
PUNISHMENT Of FLESH ON FLESH FOR BEING
(alive,beyond wall this hard brain who is living
i will make Terror fill up Her Eyes
rip
unimprisoned life ,make a *woman*

"are we god?"
ask the judges who release him

experts,who make money in america lawyers/judges experts
of men locked up in prison of men big business all down the
line $20,000 one male one small cell release him(Parole)$500,000
watch him if he keeps his Word maltliquor speed nicotine pornflick
oil cruise Unemployed cars upon the sullen streets stalk,surveille
hang out hangout his dick on corners,frontseats expose solicit
the offering of flesh by god to fix this, hungering
small lost handfullss of children of blood of animals which
pay which will pay for prison mind,of men
over and over

he is mystified "glow" "release"
he told them he announces to Parole Boards over and over
"considered to be considerably dangerous to others,expecially women
. . .if released,he is certain to resume his pattern of behavior"
mystified they know what he is YOU KNOW WHAT I AM I DO I GAVE MY
WORD 8 years imprisoned lifetimes Tensionsquirming building to
do it and they open the doors
and they open the doors RELEASE him glowing
spurt of luminous sperm

he says they want it
vicarious Glow and RELEASE .the experts
voices tell him. strangle hurt because they want him to
do it Women ask for it unspoken female words,of
luminous singing
are we god?
ask judges "there was no reason to keep him"

ARE WE GOD asks the weenie judge who is paid as a god with
godlike powers over us the blows of BigMen kicks bruises cuts rapes
strangulations knifethrusts Vengeance of BigMen,little men
who give the Word
voices tell him all vicarious men systems of cons judges hard balls
gods paid by Your Dollar tax VA SSI corrections budget payroll
rehab make such men release them upon all the soft neighborhoods
penal pensions emptiness nothing to do but
the virginal thighs of neighborhoods where women,pale
whores girls wait waiting wanting criminal
violation
it is not violation they want it
he does not Violate His PAROLE because he already told them:
Voices ,in explosions of Worlds,8 years dreams of putrid cells,a
life dead fantasies of nasty things you watch you want but
cannot i exist ,

.EXPLODE then as a god ,released incandescent sperm
flood eyes,mouth vaginas of them i Glow(fluorescent tubes,steel
stink of fear bodies of boys forced,shove in
all the institutions of pain my swollen MEMBER clubs and Expertise
of punishment
they wait frontporches office doorways bedrooms bathtubs school
swing cradle gardens are silent i hear them tell me
do things to them GIVE MY WORD the voices sing

/LINGUISTIC GLOSS,of the Shining Tongue of Madness/

now we fly thru wall,limestone text once colors of animals blue
ochre coal shapes of radio time now stain spread as bruises hemorrhage
of mind,blood is flying
it was once a cave of echoes and the skull,of luminous pictures
he couldve been i hear them

HE DOES NOT REMEMBER DOING IT HE DID NOT KNOW HER NAME

it is not of words it is in syntax,the bone
it was a skull of intention, reverence of animals
the head bangs walls sentences of simple blood all secondthoughts are gone until flying thru deep,moist textures now bright red pages dripping
HE DOES NOT EVEN REMEMBER HE WAS NOT EVEN THERE

make men sick with gods,imprisoned drug them to survive it give them women animals children to explode in Human Civilization

he could be
he couldve been
once as a hunter,artist spits luminous things on walls (flickering light,the blue horse ,bison stunned wizard her awesome cunt in walls,my skull i hear them limbs hearts dreams connections the radio is screaming she is crazy brain wires leak,all the broken things are dangling

lawyers/judges physicians dentists electrical engineers airline pilots are professions well-paid in america the Experts who are of our thought body smiles,good digestion LIGHT who climb excitable air to make a civilization of us
they spit luminous things on walls flickering music blue horses,torsion necklace of teeth bird wizard her womb of all forms
(caves,echoesHistory we hear another room,beyond Time as rental bone
CroMagnon luminous spewer of beasts on walls,becoming mans [cathedrals
the perfect Chinese horse Lascaux the gods now are flying
his arms covered with tattoos,blue hallucinating flesh
he couldve been something something

speed acid psychochemistry psychometrics dirty gas can of brainstemspasm BOOM BOX compulsions
he couldve been
he couldve been a contender yah yah yah
but HE WAS NOT THERE he is not
she is not
someone
goes by,rips out the heart,cut bleeding cannot escape

the last thing she saw of earth was his face eyes bulged,the BigMans .
purple tongue
(her scream,inside all skulls knowledge,words
those paid for justice are not screaming)catacomb of lost in dark,
fear pain health law light,good digestion
make men crazy with sick religion drug them to get thru it give
them women little girls to explode in WESTERN CIVILIZATION
a World soars in murals of air
i am a crazy old woman

women who nurse children
crazy,old mothers are not experts in anything
locked walls,bad nutrition teeth gone poetry,closed up in
rental rooms,houses we scream at(wallpaper,dead people,institutions
kids,mirrors radios nothing at all no experts
to be rich in america expert in law health teeth sheer electric
flight
and nowhere are so useless here the women unauthorized to speak
schools libraries spines drained malnutrition(the public mind) nurse
3 children 9 years welfare calcium lost to poetry
do not consider vocations of women (who reproduce,time,consume,space
professions own health and law and teeth)
poor women reproduce,crime and prison
PRISON prisoners lawyers judges parole boards are gods,poets "poor
dental hygiene" gnaw on rocks (how to get dentures among the poor,commit
crime go to prison
poor men have more teeth,more crime than poor women
are we gods

)we watch on tv,in the prison they throw their plates on the floor
roastbeef mashed potatoes peas the huge-muscled men threw it
of the floor,not enough protein for them $18 per prisoner per day for
criminal protein 50¢ per meal per person AFDC women and children
walls are cement,lies accretions of Time its rotting grin,decay
of speech erosion articulation, the walls are smug expertise,inertia
flushed excreta of well-paid bone
$20,000 year per prisoner in a small double cell
$60 day per inmate local jail

in Pelican Bay maximum security prison men claim they are
unnaturally punished they are locked up in cells cold and terrible as
the grave say they are inhumanly confined there WE ARE THE VICTIMS
forced,anal VICTIM SHIT locked

up cruel cells of,systems of Mind (CRĪMEN: the word for verdict,judgment crime is the same CRĪMEN,his Cry of Pain)
experts the experts
know what is the grave cold final forbidding how to get around it
well-trained in Pecking Order guns uniforms razorwire SM control
bureaucrazies steel lockup limbic swollen regulations death
pump-up punk self-pity videos psycho DICK revenge
FORCED ANAL PUNISHER Punish Her(she died,let left him alone afraid small beaten at the mercy of men)
and another says VICTIM SHIT what is all this VICTIM SHIT i am a good [guy
if he does not overly rape of kill
other men in prison or the judge,or
the experts this is good behavior
locked up forever with men,he is safe
experts thrive well-paid wives children security on the other side
shuffling,paper stale thoughts dull words jargons of expertise
paychecks rote forms "Positive Psychiatric Reports" "Model Prisoner"
paroles sentences paragraphs monographs whitenoise SHITNOSE
time-serving of the gods
they don't see him coming
(experts,don't see him coming
blood all over the naked child

take law into our own hands,SCREAM if not they must want it this way)

Ellie Nesler shoots her childs molester(convicted once,released) in the courthouse brain Judge Pauley makes Law and Order decision SENTENCES her to l0 years prison diagnosed TerminalBreast Cancer she has 5 years to live that means with Good Behavior she could get out in 5 years
Death will Parole her

Death keeps its Word

Expert to the bone,Spinal Determinant ,appears to us to insist without you can't stand up (they appear to but sit, process compute our rotting bone flying flying thru time taste the. putrid discourse)
although this would appear true on "material" plane it posits a problematic hierarchy of bones which some deconstruct experienceacadem

icFeminisms would seek to dissolve,extract DEMATERIALIZE as if one is not (thinking,feeding geologic)mother authorized to have opinions
of blood
DETERMINISM of "reality" poses the dilemma we must accept its prefab definitions or redefine them,extantSelves suggest some dualistic either/or choice of multioptional universe in academic opportunities rare discourse of course which does pay rent for its practioners.
but we have left the field of potential,as collapsing bones:we have left the room where stench of actual perpetration chokes and gags us:do we are we have we not argue from strange experience being alive viz that if spines collapse in MEANING the inferential crux of context is one can't stand up(talk,back,fight,shake nerves knots of fist exploding thru the world as blood flew) or in the property of trees gagged with her own red tights and flying,flying red bird wings up and away,such Expert Design,events and therefore some Determinism (terminUs)seems appears subtextual subposited even though we rush with enormous linguistic erasures to subvert (the flow upwards of vast departures the floorboards of this department)where Experts slaver,drool on their knees like naked dogs
(i scrub i scrub i scour i cannot clean the floors,wails of this apartment the radio with one long stationary,expanding cry)
ratatatat ratatatat ratatatatat ratatatatatatat ratatthedoor
the howl of men as Dogs sniffing rectums of their own Law ,Experts
just ice prevails
if admit then practice of spinalDeterentermination does said praxis say it lead us into what enormous construal as BIOLOGIC ONTOLOGY which stigmaticText,critique suggests meets its reversal (variable?)in experiential equivalent oppositional appearance of wholly inert, unselfmoveable mass which also,in self-definition experienced as determining something something
are we gods?

abstract ,impassive ,impotent ,laid back STARE AT THE WALL viz,i.e., *praxis of paralysis* man's law emerges caves to retrieve the unopposed terms of discourse with their discredited matrix bringing us back,where we are stained,foul mattress the stench of his cell to move or to be unable to move or to be unable to rise from the floor seems to posit some DETER/Termination of an END of a prior intent or dream of NATURE

EXPLOSIONS OF STARS BODIES OF STARS INTO OUR FORMS THOUGHT [CAVES
AND SHAPES OF CALCIUM (the echoes of such event)

release RELEASE him over and over to GLOW in the shining bloodstream
[of
all night
do they not Want This, EVERYONE? forever? forever?

consider the massive headtrips sustainable by an economy of abundance grotesquely imbalanced in the direction of funded abstractions and their subtextualized careers in referential delineation from the great exterior masses of apparent "material" or "real" situations such as living bodies germ veins garbage cars investment brokerage pipe
[corrosions
(want this, EVERYONE WANTS THIS wait for vicarious release this Evil tension)influxions of indifferent definitions of sewage and related contaminations into the specifiably "cleansed" or unsubliminal random *debouche* of professionals would seem to suggest whatever possible on paper in mind IS doable,eatable regardless withholding the referent nonconsiderial world or responding agonies or,i.e. dream on thy sheer linguistic lingerie tongue exercise to DREAM is not possible,alive

but twists itself elsewhere that is the bones of actual screams and utter hallucinated flux of blood discourse poetry clots choke and phlegm serum of a vision from mouths nostrils anuses of those unable refusing to vomit huge complexes,oceans into coke bottles or other (similar of oppositional)units of oral retension,reductive dimension (books) MLA Journals Feminist Studies bloody periodical (critiques du mal tête feminine du bouche bourgeois)
(because we are so TrulyFine above it all NOT ANIMALS repeat we are not "beasts" Biologic Determinism do not apply we are Abstract beyond the neck,our careers are such crimes are senseless "monstrous" unpredictable nor are we gods?)

subterefuge,of SYNTAX are so many hiding underground dungeons,caverns of the hunted Quasimodo (ars longa vita brevis:so long,suckers)
subterranean rivers of resultant hells are powerful ARE flowing and question whether attack on "sin" is even relevant to the field of tortured visions *in situo* now a plaza of burning flesh seems materially pertinent but somehow abysmally overdone in "fact"

what are the lucrative industries of pain,in america CRIME SICKNESS TOOTHLESS RAGE EXPLODING NERVES INSIDE THESE WALLS MADNESS (there are wings of terrific metals,to fly away excluding those who play games with balls cunts,titties giant $port$ figures lest we be left sick toothless lawless cold hungry

without voice alone deaf in the dark
unable to fly
yr Taxes pay for EVERYTHING
he doesnt even remember being

we can go on like this forever do you want to stop?
"want" "stop" "forever" "you" "i" "go" "we" can like this go on to
there is a tax on sin. it is called Time. and SIN is WITHOUT meaning
forever.
the child is dead

and those who make academic living self-researchingly breaking down one universe,world of DISCOURSE into others must bleed well have a genius,POETRY to replace it with time more Real or if not if they cannot (expertise:paralysis) shut up shut up shut up leave move our bloody screaming thru walls permeate solid flesh compartments(cells of terrible rooms)where my heart is screaming

thus conclusions become titles demonstrate models circle of dead-eye dogs in cosmos of tail-interrogating "closure" which is not closed,closes nothing but a more problemautomatic theoremetic palpable grim intermuttent pain in the ass (of dogs,scAvengers of the rubble that is left, that is, but also the mind OPEN ALL NIGHT 24 HOURS ,who speaks of, unauthorized weariness).
bAnal employment of statistical mediocrities as institutes of compulsion who is punked who punks who gets it in the ass TO MAKE OF THE UNIVERSE A SHITHOLE Big Man
say it. the more Latinate the more Lies

:toward a Paradigm (phoneme? chakra? mode of discourse? 20¢?) those who speak correctly who are authorized to speak. they are the ones with Teeth (degrees of,credit cards careers, medical
and dental coverage)
i have none
she is crazy

so she goes to get medical/dental care(spine nodes breast skull teeth) and there is none she is told woman old poor writes books no coverage has been homeless, she is crazy "we have reason to think you surfer from mental/emotional disturbance" and when she says no they send PhD of psychology to her door to test her mind

refuses screams on telephones returns forms go to hell disappears at appointed time they break into suspects house to investigate living arrangements find on bathroom mirror and adjoining wall yellow stick-on paper squares with hand-scrawled messages saying FEED CHINA, this constitutes evidence she is crazy they obtain bench warrant to seize her person remove her to the local psychiatric detention center where upon her delusionally outraged protest she is injected with sufficient grains of sand of thorazine to shut her up
that the duplex neighbor ex-man besieged cancer mother 3 children had recently obtained 2-year old female partChow dog named "China" who chained outside inposition to defend the property from intruders drunk cokehead excon boyfriends crazy exhusband all their driveby relatives randomly spewing beercans bullets revenge rocks thru 2 a.m. car windows at yr sleeping eyes was earlier that day upon leaving for 3-day visit to Arizona sister said neighbor request subject to "feed the dog" upon which agreed and left a key to obtain bag dogfood on jumbled backporch behind screendoor,thus notes left by subject to remind herself subject to do task which eventuated in her removal from her life and "literary work" and relocate inpermanent drugged brain state of mental asylum for the humanly delusional (i.e. one deranged enough to leave herself notes reminding herself to provide nourishment for an Asian nation of some 3 billion souls when the woman obviously and verifiably did not have wherewithal essentially to feed herself)
n.b.: did subject not apply (unsuccessfully) for public assistance?

she is not a billion years old she is notRoot&flower ofHistory is not the skull inside wall some woman sings crazy "CRAZY" on radio of her destiny as plane (small,private) goes down in swift flames
and now she screams at her kids SHUT UP I CANT SLEEP I CANT THINK [she
cant study i am typing ratatat they yell,shriek jump up and down I WILL BEAT THE SHIT OUT OF YOU DAMN IT I MEAN IT

scream i scream we are screaming the radio squeezes boombox machine heart a terrible noise we cant breathe
we are the ones with meaning who mean it it is not blood,crazy-women pleasure "jouissance" equal privilege perfume ad satisfy one wants the mass commercial TrueRomance(only a 6-pack drunk to numb the sufficient pain) one wants SOLELY space time a partial modem of intelligent, space, time quiet LUMINOUS which inour Expert Discourse of need is "problematic"
duplex singlemother three kids (5-6-11) with a typewriter battering uptight next to the paper thin bedroom wall the cheapest one can get and

still no one can afford it and thus the subject exteriorizes into
malignant typocentric neighborhoods of anecdotal noise and
migraine interrogation wonder resultant appropriation futures
(we go on like this forever do you want to stop

> and now the mother is dying post-surgery pain chest hips they
> told her FAT lose weight feel better about yourself surgical
> oncologist expert she speaks no english speaks nothing but
> stolid endurance poverty mother of much flesh not enough the
> doctor wanted $1000 more not covered by coverage of plans of
> world of the night the coverage of night is very deep and quiet
> here she is dying now tumor into chest bones and hips and the
> daughter drops out of nursing school tocare for and who will
> sit 3 children whils she studies or works the only place that
> can afford the Baptist Bible Camp School bus takes them
> off to play and make known to them GodsWill the mother riddled
> now bullets of cancer rapidly spread the drive-by shooting of
> experts of the experts
> death

a phone rings on the other side that is the Universe,says STOP
message message heard received message flying thru the wall as its
exploding particles
(or: is the universe linguistic? holographique? Rubiks Cube of endless
true infinite expanding despite no being able to afford the rent
duplex a p a r t m e n t s. . .? deepart meants mentis
the typography of department is (re: art meant) on the shadow side of
stars
the origin of our universe is on the darkside of our stars

Quotes from 1978 Psychiatric Report on Richard Allen Davis a sealed document ordered unsealed after January 27, 1994 ABC PRIMETIME covered the Polly Klaas kidnapping and murder

A US NEWS & WORLD REPORT essay by John Leo, "Dealing with Career Predators" (April 11, 1994) quoted a criminologist's description of R. A. Davis as "a monstrous personality".

"What is all this VICTIM SHIT. . . .I'm a good guy" quote from a CBS 48 HOURS report (March 9, 1994) on parolee Russell Obremski. Obremski raped and murdered an 8-month pregnant woman; in flight, he kidnapped, raped and murdered another mother of 2. Given "Two Life Sentences" he was released in November 1993 after serving 24 years in prison. A few months later, Obremski was arrested and indicted on charges of molesting a 4 year old girl. (USA TODAY, March 24, 1994).

#3 - shelter

on the west coast Ireland before radio before tv one could
stand there clear daylight once every 7 years see luminous picture
around globe over atlantic a woman hanging white laundry in
an alley in Brazil
and hear an incredible singing
mayan races african drums washed up on the soft beach huge
messages
air so clear you could hear,see voyage of a world
around itself a biologic singing,clairvoyant atmosphere of
all story

these were the happy isles, Hy Brasil (america) transmit on
waves of the deep sea television our eyes immigrant radio distances
ratatatat of random typewriters
always legends,news reports of the clean land beyond

i was born in a duplex conceived my first years a duplex on
the pacific ocean my father self-employed radio repair 1936
with small converted garage shop on one side,and nextdoor
the other living unit was a medium the gypsy they said she
conducted seances in the dark rooms next to my conception
and sleep and infant dream as i grew into this telepathic
wiring hearing seeing
what happens in the dark

what speaks the dark

red tights, girls
knotted,a gag man's bloody sweatshirt
tape a condom
he used a condom
she was alive then,he said among
good earth, and trees
she did not scream

the ritual of lost men discover america men with nothing to do
but move around lost they want to eat lust swell the
flesh they have betrayed once given them they now believe as the
punishment we deserve they are not of a Devil they are of

Themselves,lost sick masturbatory crazed they penis they
punish the female perhaps because she gives them birth

drops them into water,dirt soiled cloth howling animals

are we gods?

invention of cars men cruising deep pornographies of oil
insomnias the eyes of dead fish
cruising by young girls laughing on bicycles show them yr
sour unzipped lap sick hand masturbating tumescence of losers
fish eyes dead eyes 200 million sperm per come oozes to the rotten
bottom end of the world the sea receives foam waste residue release
of TIME
into all eyes

he used a condom
closed up inside foul car exoskeletal cruising insect of squirming
Xs X-rate techno images dials of videos the glass of his eyes
we see so closely into thru we cruise the mutilated girls
of landscape
whoever stood up from worms to be human now lie down again to sleep
nothing to do but stalk the fresh dreams of neighborhoods that they
are innocent unarmed civilian flesh of living that anything
could be clean alive outside dark windows of empty eyes
beyond him his fingers have not squeezed with sperm anything beyond
untouched undirtied violated by masturbations of his
dreams

hear the distant transmissions of dreams

waste of young girls bright minds victory
of sperm explosions testicle revenge
the sour masturbations of killers over us
useless men

the one who screams on the other side i think of birds in jungle
flight some existences are ludic,consciousness a violent red
shriek of one bird flying inside a skull,wall

he used a condom
what in gods name for
not to reproduce himself on the other side of Death

only in prison,is shelter from evil
behind some wall,closed up utterly alone
of,where he is among men so evil as he
or men who are not innocent, but love the desperation of
exploding flowers

no child no woman beyond his solitude self-disgust becomes
[revenge
only with opening of flowers,spring him
release him let him out to do it again
revenge of man of flesh for the Eve of being,flesh
which he has made of it (us,this)
only in prison,is shelter
closed up inside his terrible wall,alone teeth forehead
against
my skull

A BULLET THRU THE BRAIN WHAT YOU GIVE TO ANY SICK
[ANIMAL
EVEN THE FAMILY DOG IF IT BECOMES RABID NOT LET OUT
[ON THE
HUMAN STREETS TO BITE AGAIN

they seem to be having trouble enacting justice
give him to me give him to crazy old women the witches of
justice i will spread his legs arms slake him naked
to the public earth upon her last place
i will with my poetry hand cut off his dick
scrotum shave him menstrual bloody pubic hair render him
bare and raw as a little girl spreadeagled shove
his genitals in his mouth
so he does not scream
then standing back i invite the community of men
to do him all they dream of scheme is dick in a hole dick in a
hole dick in a hole let every man come forward one
by one shove sticks rods bayonets police batons broken
bottles ram his asshole jam the naked bloody hole i
have made into him (hell) until they have had their fill
killer dick shove in a bloody hole
once and for all

until they weary,sick of selves
what they do what they have done
what he does for all of them vicarious revenge
systems of rapers
expertise of ravaged flowers
for they know not what they do is a lie all living things
know what we do
(tell me of yr sad life, i listen)
and then i stand with a bloody knife hand
raised up,dripping i say *next?*

the shelter in Tucson many homeless women their children my first night i remember the young girl 10, 11 so eager polite pressed close to me on couch a FAMILY CIRCLE open to an article on cutting paper flowers, i told her of the fiesta of many nations i'd seen with my daughter who was her age, the Polish exhibit a woman scissoring incredible cathedral windows,fireworks of flowers,birds at the courthouse plaza outside, given to the children .
her name was Sherlyn Karen Shondra i can't remember Cathleen Sara Polly it was Sheila
so eager polite i knew she was frightened, her mother homeless nicotine thin frayedged at the mercy of streets habitual men they were on their way to Phoenix she said they were going to have an apartment a place to live she'd go to school
she was so glad to sit with me, stay, pressed against my body the glossy magazine spread open on her lap and mine,questions questions keeping me there discussing Flower Cutting Paper Flowers a Polish Folk Art did you see this how do they do this and this she trembled with an eagerness,shining with what i learned to know was Terror

in the news report the mothers ex-boyfriend just went up the stairs of the new apartment they were moving into opened fire as they say a gun(opening of red flowers) wounded the mother,killed the girl a sudden red bloom appeared in her chest her eyes wide
i knew she was afraid we were all afraid i could do nothing her mother came into the room appeared from shadows pulled her away a deranged look at me suspicious HOMELESS WITH A HOPELESS WEAK
[POOR
MOTHER THE THINGS SHE'D ALREADY HAD DONE TO HER THE
[THINGS SHE

FEARED WOULD HAPPEN i could do nothing
but feel her glistening eagerness to know *EVERYTHING* about
cut paper flowers before she was dragged off to the dark

no Shondra was the one i last saw sitting on a toilet the open door,

she was young half indian from the northwest glistening pretty
but a scar diagonal across her face from cheekbone to jaw because
drugs alcohol because they took away her children she abandoned

her boyfriend took her down to the dry river bank camps where she
was gangbanged by all the homeless men there *fucked in the ass*
i heard them joke of it later with her boyfriend, she wasn't around

the last time i saw her hunched on a toilet legs sprawled open
flushed with lightbulb the fenced junkyard after midnite the needle in
her arm she was nodding the line of men, 5-7 of them slouched away from
this little shrine into the darkness, waiting

May 19, 1994

ANTONIN ARTAUD

from INTERJECTIONS

(Translated from the French
by Clayton Eshleman,
with Bernard Bador)

The extreme point of mysticism,
I hold it now in the real and in my body,
like a toilet broom.

For me, living man, I am a city besieged by the army of the dead,
intercepted by their charnel houses,
cut off from all external objects, while I am the external of a dead man,
me,
and those who attack me
are outside,
and it is in the inside that they agitate,
it is in the inside of my body that they cut the thread of the nervous antenna, through which I must scold their bodies.
(Old cinematography of catastrophe with which *the illusion* still dresses me,
prompted by old escapees from hell,
giving man another bread to crop;
for the bread with which I am ulcerated at this time is that of the infamous eroticism that beings hurl at me.)

I strike a blow,
the other, from inside my body, at the farthest exterior of the earth responds to it with an imbeciling fluid,
crossed with the abject cross of beings who do not know who has made time and who,

beings draw themselves from my interior,

but to what extent?

I will do it again and again,
this man,
on you,
Antonin Artaud,
said god,
the universal god of beings,
always incorrigibly foul,
and always incorrigibly there,
and who says to you:
Take that, take that,
you didn't get me out of there yet,
I'm always there no matter what you try to do,
you haven't defeated me and I have that:
caca, the cream of your. . .
it is me who gobbles up the cake you made crumb by crumb,
and I made a child out of it,
to put him in your place,
maybe one day I'll gobble him up too, unless he has a better way than you, and knows to bite me where I stew.

With what will I fill nothingness?

Waiting for the spectre flattened against me who melts with each of my blows to finish his delirium.

And not like god,
but like, being, me,
this unique body,
from where all,

even god, came out,
that I have been violated for life,
insulted, offended, dirtied,
polluted, muddied, smutted,
day and night,
since I am alive,

no man at the end of his tether
who does not know how to find in Artaud
something to remake an existence with;

that I have been a little bit everywhere martyrized;

and as to be prevented from being god that I was stabbed in the back, in Marseille,
stabbed in Paris,
received an iron bar blow on the spinal column in Dublin;
as being convicted of being god
and to preclude me, me, from remembering it
that I have been everywhere assassinated, poisoned, beaten to death, electrocuted,
and in order to prevent me from finding consciousness again and the science of my capacities and my strength
and to defend myself against my persecutors;
for god is called by its real name Artaud, and the name of this kind of unnameable thing between abyss and nothingness,
which partakes of the nature of abyss and nothingness,
and that one does not call or name,
and it seems that it is a body too,
and that Artaud is a body too,
not the idea, but the fact of the body,
and the fact that what is nothingness is the body,
the unsoundable abyss of the face, of the inaccessible plan of the surface, through which the abyss body shows itself;

the Tibetans, the Mongols, the Afghans listening to god
or that the abyss the infinite talks to them,
sounding

the bewildered lair of the knot through which the unconscious heart liberates its own thirst from being before what one calls nothingness,
say having heard in themselves rise up the syllables of this vocable:

AR-TAU.

A few initiates wanted to plead that it was there the designation of a force but not that of an individual,
but not an initiate, in reality, who did not know that this force was that of a man and who did not want to chain this man to forbid him to exist, even if it entails assassinating him later.
And in reality no initiate who did not know that Antonin Artaud, born in Marseille September 4th 1896, was really that man who, at the bottom of nothingness, was sleeping.

So then it is in prevention from being god
that I,
Antonin Artaud,
have been martyrized for the centuries of centuries,

and as being exactly this man, and the man who never wanted any god,
and whom all the churches have always persecuted to extirpate his atheism from him,

and it is in prevention from being god that I, Antonin Artaud, petit bourgeois from Marseille, September 4th, 1896, have seen myself stabbed in the back on June 10th, 1916, in Marseille in front of the church of the Reformed,
asphyxiated by spells throughout my entire existence,

stabbed in 1928 in Montmartre a second time in the back,
then struck in Dublin with an iron bar on the spinal column,
attacked on a ship, with, in front, the anchor hole wide open to
let my body through,
straitjacketed on the same ship after the attack,
then interned,
maintained seventeen days in a straitjacket with the feet attached
to the bed,
kept three years in solitary confinement,
poisoned systematically for five months,
that I have suffered one month of coma under the shock of the
last poisoning, in the Sainte-Anne asylum,
finally subjected to two years of electric shock in the Rodez
asylum to lose in it the memory of my so-called supranatural
self,
even though I never had two self, but one only, that of a man
who never wanted to hear talk of god.
Then.
Then?
It is in prevention from being god that I have been a little
everywhere persecuted as a man throughout all my life,
here,
but I have known it only a very short time before the beginning
of my internment,
that it was because all people believed me, me, to be this man,
suspected me of being this body,
had identified me as being this body of man from where all life
came out,

and in prevention from being this body
in which everyone always served himself
without using entrance or exit,
and felt capable of supplying himself,
and which he believed could be used to answer to all his needs,
in prevention from being this body charged to provide for all the
needs,
and pillaged to the point of plague,
for there is no plague nor cholera, smallpox nor syphilis,
that the succubate,

well organized,
cannot explain.

It is in prevention from being god
that I am day and night flooded with the sea of the gism of succubi,
maintained in the gaseous placenta of the seminal alluvium of the water mothers, with which one hundred billion harpies every night smear my conscience to maintain me in this life,
the world it is water, air, earth, fire, aether,
but it is also the arch-ponderable of all that has always been hidden
and which is this sea of miasmas ja,
of obscene corporal suppurations
which paralyze all will;

everybody gets hauled over the coals,
but there is there a kind of ignoble tenderness
with which I am particularly favoured.

I have seen myself in 1915 prey to strange phenomena.

I know now where they were coming from,
for it is in prevention from being god that I am every night honored with the visits of one hundred thousand vampires etc.,
and it is because my body is *good* that it is always meticulously visited.

The current plan
(against sleep and art)
of the little Sufi multifolded in a humbug of acrid cow-dung,
for all poison is a sexual plexus.

I do not know anything more than my sensibility of all the seconds,
those of the moments when I feel most myself and most *intensely* present, awake, willful and *warned.*
What I know best about myself is my unalienable will, infinite as the volume or the plain of my whole body impossible to pierce.
And concerning this point anyone or no one could care less, ever, about another offense;
it being understood that the body of Artaud
which contains in the innate state
all that which serves to make that from which the life of silt is born;
it is from this body that one draws
something to remake reality,
something to remake oneself in reality, and to make for oneself a reality;
whoever has squandered too much of his blood, of his sperm, of his saliva, or of the snot from his nose,
it is inside Artaud that he comes to rebutter:
and the Tower of Butter in Tibet
is the sign of this hold of beings
on that which composes my flesh to be eaten,
is like the perpetual pig of the barometer of how much of my butter is needed by beings, to remain in reality.

I have perhaps a thousand friends in the spheres,
in fact perhaps ten living men
who have forgotten that it was done,

who no longer knew what it was all about,
and on what life is centered,
with which crime against Artaud buried,
masturbated and annihilated,
life has always sustained itself.
I have to say to all those friends
that if beings have never forgotten how to approach Artaud by magic,
how to draw saliva from his mouth, and his shit from his coccyx, and his sperm under his pubis,
how, from which hollow blubber lips
to turn the night around his bed,
from which opening of the teguments,
from which monstrous dilation of the pores, from which sanious flayings of tissues under the teguments,
to leech onto all that is him in order to suck him bone dry,
and it is in this way that Antonin Artaud feels his testicles suppurate
in the middle of which a thousand heads circulate having perched their paradise there,
vying with one another to sneer at him, if he does not disclose immediately where the bad spirit is lodged, which came right up to him;
—And where I am, you don't know where I am, nor how I arrived here.

It is in this way that one swallows Artaud, that one pumps him, that one defecates him, that one licks him and licks one's chops over him,
in this way throughout life;
and if Antonin Artaud complains,
that means *he* is delirious;
quick, a little electric shock to cure him of believing in spirits;
but it is precisely that Antonin Artaud does not believe in spirits, but that he has always believed in men,
who have never known how to do anything else to buttress their ignoble lives than to come back to life in him,
and it is in order for that not to be known and to pursue their hideous profits in peace,

that they had Artaud put to bed,
completely naked, in a cell, held secretly for three years,
and had him poisoned and convicted of madness,
so that he would not be able to revolt
and so that nobody would think to help him.
But Artaud can do without men, and it is all by himself that he got his liberty back.

For magic to enter into Artaud,
it's magic to croak in Artaud,
and that's the way that Antonin Artaud took his enemies prisoners,
for I, Antonin Artaud, for nine years convicted of delirium and madness, now I performed magic.
I performed it for three years in Rodez, I had performed it for three years in Ville-Evrard, before Rodez,
and those were the sniffings and whirlings for which the doctors reproached me.
As for magic, I take in my thick breath, and by means of my nose, of my mouth, of my hands and of my feet I project it against everything that hinders me.
And how many boxes, chests, totems, grigri, partitions, surfaces, sticks, nails, ropes, and a hundred nails, breast plates, helmets, armor platings, masks, carders, iron collars, winches, garrots, gibbets and dials, are there now in the air
by my will projected.
I will tell you that when I will have made society give back the billion tons of cocaine and heroin it stole from me,—with the aid of nine small pneumatic cannons, and the cane
that I have forged.

[8 February 1947]

Me, Artaud,
worked over,
to rid me of evil,

but why not know when it will end.

I cannot know what I will do tomorrow,
do not want to know,
but I want to know that evil will end immediately.
No, it will never end either.
So.
I am the master of the elements
and the one of events.
I don't want to be touched anymore,
invaded
as I am by others,
I don't want to be put to sleep by others,
sleep is an illusion in which one continues to live.

I don't want these death pangs anymore.

I don't want to sleep anymore.

I don't want to die.

I don't want to dream anymore.

NOTE

These six dictations are from Artaud's *Oeuvres complètes,* Gallimard, Paris: Vol. XIV**. The two books (293 pages, plus drafts and annotation by Artaud's meticulous literary executor/editor Paule Thévenin) make up a

single work, the last collection that Artaud himself was to edit: *Suppôts et suppliciations* (a "suppôt" is a henchman or watchfiend; "suppliciations" is apparently coined by Artaud off "supplicier," to torture—something like "torturations" in English; note though the sound play in "suppôt/suppli," making the French very difficult to totally translate in English).

These dictations, of 73 which make up "Interjections," the third and final section of *Suppôts*, for the most part fall near the end of the work. According to Thévenin, they represent "Artaud's synthesis of all the texts that bear on *the prevention from being god* (especially the two great texts 'And not, like god' and 'So then it is in prevention from being god'), using repetition and variation as in a musical composition." As for the rest of *Suppôts:* section one, "Fragmentations," is made up of 10 short essays; section two, "Letters," of 35 letters written by Artaud to friends during the last year and a half of his incarceration in the Rodez asylum. In other words, *Suppôts* is a work consisting of essays, letters, and dictations—a unique combination. Other translations from this work may be found in *Sulfur*#8, along with reproductions of some of Artaud's notebook pages from the same period.

After Artaud's release from Rodez in May, 1946, he took up residency in a clinic, outside of Paris, at Ivry-sur-Seine. The following December he signed a book contract for the work which would become *Suppôts* (the contract was broken and the work as we have it today did not appear until 1978). A month earlier, Louis Broder, the would-be publisher, hired a young secretary, Luciane Abiet, to visit Artaud daily every morning at Ivry and to take down in hand material that he would dictate to her. These dictations were then typed up and corrected/revised by Artaud. Readers interested in the complicated problems in achieving a publishable typescript should read Thévenin's extensive notes.

The dictation period, running from November 1946 to February 1947, appears to include a modest portion of Artaud's proclamations from this period. He would break into dictation at any time—while in bed, at a table in a café, or while with friends—only to suddenly interrupt himself and become absorbed in a long silence. Abiet would arrive early in the morning, often when Artaud, still sleepy, would be sitting up in bed, his café au lait cooling on the bedside table. Abiet's difficulties in getting down exactly what Artaud was saying was compounded by the fact that he was missing most of his teeth and often fighting hesitations brought about by sleeping pills and drugs.

For more material on this period as well as Artaud's entire life and body of work, see Stephen Barber's excellent *Blows and Bombs* (Faber and Faber, London, 1993), in particular p. 135. Artaud readers might also want to examine another first-rate work on a poet, Alain Borer's *Rimbaud in Abyssinia* (Morrow, 1984—deftly translated by Rosmarie Waldrop). Both

Rimbaud and Artaud suffered perpetual vagabondage, seemingly in bondage to the same "desert" again and again, whether it was the road from Charleville to Paris, the trek from Harrar to the African coast or, in Artaud's case, the Tarahumara mountains of northern Mexico and the confines of asylums. Rimbaud died in 1891 in Marseille; 5 years later, Artaud was born there, and in his late 20s had this to say about his predecessor who wrote his greatest poetry at the age Artaud himself underwent his first crisis of depression: "It is Rimbaud with his sand-burned hands who dares the infinite descent into the I, with images where a trembling Life takes shape at the border of Nothingness, he, Rimbaud, and before him Novalis who said: A style is the more perfect the closer it comes to Nothing." *(Abyssinia,* p. 311)

ROBERT HERSHON

THE GERMAN LUNATIC

for Paul Violi

Otto Leuben, the German lunatic, bet that he could turn up a pack of cards in a certain order. He turned the cards 10 hours a day for 20 years, exactly 4,246,028 times, before he succeeded.

—Robert Ripley

I don't believe it. Of course I'd like to believe it
but I'm tired of being amazed. Analysis before amazement,
that's my knotty-pine wall motto, forensics before faith
And yet

in Martha's summer house we wander naked tan and lumpy among
the damp books left by mysterious old children. The swans
on the pond are fully mechanized and the ospreys are painted
on the backdrop, but the illusion of ease is complete. Everyone
should have sex on a table sticky with jam from time to time.
Roger Henstooth, the New York herald, seen standing by the sea,
the undertow sucking the sand from beneath his heels, stood at
another point on the shore of the *same* ocean, staring yearningly
at the horizon, *fifty* years later. He was larger—and older!

Otto Leuben is just weeks into his task. His confidence level is high,
his air jaunty. What does he do the other fourteen hours, after the
deck has grown sticky? Does the national economy reflect his diligence?
Do other lunatics emulate him? Ethnic Germans in Poland? Ethnic Poles
in Hungary? Turkish laborers in Silesia? If we could get an additional
ten card-minutes per man, Mr. Minister, we could rule the world.
Ten minutes, just think of it.

Professor Scribner, the oral historian, swallowed a set of
pearl buttons every morning for forty years and was used

as ballast on The Good Ship Lollipop. Oysters
in the brackish waters grow more and more agitated.

And have we heard from Leuben today or any of his people?
He was three cards from success last Thursday when an errant breeze
played him mischief! He shuffled without complaint, according to
reports. Was he using the Delta Flies Florida deck or the
one with doggies—here the message breaks off.

Earnest Gerund, the Delaware divine, was stranded in the high church
for twenty years and survived on martini sandwiches. He remained of
good cheer but no one can sing in that key.

And what, if I may ask, *is* the "certain order"?

Ducky Lowery had the world's largest collection of syllables, but
he kept them in a gym bag and he put the gym bag in the Buick
and he drove the Buick to Pennsylvania and he misplaced the Keystone
State and that's how Paramus New Jersey became a Great Lakes port.

What is the certain order? I'll take one guess and the gods will
reward my modesty: A23574 of spades, QKJ of hearts, I mean clubs,
I mean cups—He turns away. Was there a slight smile in his lunatic
eyes? Was I even close? He shuffles.

Giuseppe Di Maio of Naples was born with *two hearts*
and Alfred Langeven of Detroit could blow out a
candle with *his eyes* and Margaret Guest, *age three years,*
earned a degree in music from Baker University
and the great sloth of Ecuador and a Chinese sage
and the Portuguese navy—the townspeople have seen
the foreign women with their jam-smeared faces. The alienist
will permit no intruders. Still they come, leaving their jars
by the front door—guava, quince, blackberry and robin.

Who is monitoring Leuben—ten hours a day, making notes,
mumbling into a tape recorder? *Are* there tape recorders? No,
because then there would be computers and if there were computers
what employment would there be for lunatics?

And who *took* the bet? What were the odds, what were the stakes?
Was it a casual moment, a joking bet over coffee? Was Leuben

already a lunatic or did he become a lunatic only after succumbing
to the temptation to win the wager? How did he win the celebrity
that enabled him to be known as *the* German lunatic? Were there others
of national scope? Were they a measurable percentage of the population?
Did they have a league a church an agent a slogan
a jersey a turf a tattoo a kind of
funny way of walking when the moon is shining merry on the bay

(Put your elbow down once, it will find jam on the table.
Put it down again and again and a pattern will form.)

Every day like every other day, the perfect order, the inviolable
routine—
but is there something in the air this morning? Or did we imagine
it later
while regaling the townspeople? Leuben to his table at his usual 7:44,
breakfast from the Acey Deucy Cafe. He pisses on the wood stove, howls
like a hound and puts on his mittens and his motorman's cap. He
shuffles twice.
He lays out the first six cards—vertically, it being spring—and
the gods explode in laughter. An exchange of glances between the lunatic,
his
scorekeeper, his oddsmaker, his chronicler, his housekeeper, his
purseholder,
his devoted opponent. Six more cards, fresh jam, a pattern of steps.

You may not share the triumph, only the aftermath—the Prussian
celebrations and the analysis by experts, many of them
retired madmen. If a lunatic believes himself to be Otto von Bismarck
and it develops that he *is* Otto von Bismarck, is that not a cure
(and the French are in a jam). If the laying out of cards is
not merely incidental to this lunacy but central to it,
then the achievement proclaims recovery and
what say you now townspeople and handicappers.

So Leuben the citizen strolling on the strasse, shaven and bathed,
clear of eye and nostril, a swan tattoo on his cheek,
a portrait on his lapel, schoolchildren romping in the traffic jam,
the mayor's wife climbing to the town clock, the street musicians
chewing
on their sparrows, the very grass braided with red ribbon and
Leuben pauses and smiles and scratches and whispers: I did it.
I could do it again.

GUSTAF SOBIN

UNDULANT-OBLIQUE
(A Study of Wave Patterns in Ionico-Massalian Pottery)

If wine, as we're told,[1] opened the way to civilization in the still barbarous regions of the Western Mediterranean, the history of wine cannot be disassociated from the amphoras in which it was transported nor the cups, craters, skyphos from which it was drunk. For here, "contained" and "container" form, in fact, a single, cultural entity. Imported into Provence in the seventh century B.C. by both Etruscans and Phonicians, wine and, inseparably, the clay vessels it came in constituted—as barter—the single most sought-after commodity. With the arrival of the Ionians, a century later, this trade increased considerably. For the Ionians not only exchanged goods with the indigenous populations (essentially wine, pottery and bronzeware for tin, iron and amber) but established emporia of their own for stocking and distributing those goods. The first and, by far, the most significant of those emporia—those fortified trading posts—would be Massalia itself: present-day Marseilles.

Who were they, in fact? Called by Herodotus the "progenitors of history," the Ionians were Greeks who'd settled in Asia Minor and managed to assimilate the cultures of kindred civilizations prevalent in that region at that particular time. The assimilation of those cultures, it turned out, would be fructuous. Founding in a very short period of time their own schools of philosophy, art and architecture, inventing coinage and propagating, altogether, the acquisitions of an entirely original culture throughout the Mediterranean, they'd quickly become the radiant center of all Hellenism. Nothing they touched, it seems, wasn't marked by a natural sense of measure, grace, innate proportion: by what might be called, indeed, an "auroral intelligence."

Nowhere would the expression of that intelligence be more widely diffused than in their pottery, and, most especially, in the decorative motifs with which that pottery was embellished. One particular motif, the wave pattern (misleadingly labeled in English the "wood pattern") seems particularly relevant. For there, in so many oscillating ripples, the Ionians would give expression to the very energies at play in that generative period of their evolution. Whether the ceramic in question happens to have originated in Ionia itself or in its new, emergent colony to the west,

Massalia, matters little, for in both cases the motif underwent a virtually identical evolution. In tracing that very evolution, we might find ourselves following—quite inadvertently—the vibratory weave of an originating vision. Might find ourselves drawn, on oscillation alone, over the very threshold—in fact—of that auroral occasion.

*

* *

"For the fuller's screw, the way straight and crooked are one and the same."[2] So wrote Heraclitus, an Ionian himself, in describing the apparent contradiction of opposites in the inseparable flow of the singular: that of Being. No statement more accurately describes, indeed, the thrust inherent in that undulant pattern. Written, in fact, at the very moment the Ionian decor had come to free itself from the fixity of certain "orientalizing" motifs, it expressed the *fluidity* of the new philosophy. It spoke of a universe in continuous motion, change, in which "all things are driven through all others"[3] by a single, governing principle. Don't the waves, indeed, illustrate that principle? Existing in a "harmony of tensions," don't they, like Heraclitus's lyre, vibrate to a series of "tensions and releases?"[4]

Studying this particular motif in regional museums or in those rare, archeological papers devoted to the Hellenization of Gaul, one is struck by a curious phenomenon. In the sixth century B.C.—at the very outset, that is, of the Ionian colonization of Marseilles—the wave pattern tends to oscillate freely: to ripple in a loose set of seemingly erratic intervals. Labelled by the archeologists as "oblique," "uneven," or "irregular," it's generally dismissed by those very specialists as something primitive if not, quite simply, maladroit. But *is* it, we have to ask ourselves? Aren't we in the presence, rather, of a graphic rendering of that very flux Heraclitus himself first evoked? In the presence, that is, of an incipient—emergent—energy flow, artisanally interpreted? What the potter's hand, incising the freshly thrown clay, delineated? Gave shape to?

Flux, flow: we're reminded of the Greek infinitive, *rhein*, which describes this very movement, and which Emile Benveniste qualified as the "essential predicate" in Ionian philosophy from the time of Heraclitus onward. What, exactly, does this predicate signify? In Benveniste's luminous essay, *La Notion de 'rythme' dans son expression linguistique*,[5] we learn that *rhein*, as the affluent of *rhitmos* (from which we derive rhythm) comes to mean the manner by which objects in nature are deployed, positioned, momentarily situated. In combining *rhein* (to flow) and the suffix *-thmos* (suggesting the mode by which a particular action is perceived—actively perceived—by the senses themselves) we arrive at the

definition of an immensely rich, immensely variable quantity. *Rhitmos,* at this auroral moment in Western thought, isn't to be translated as idea, as fixed notion, but as the fluid architectonics of each given instance. "It designates form," in Benveniste's words, but "form as shaped by the mobile, the moving, the liquid; as something that has no organic consistency of its own. It is more like a pattern drawn across water, like a particular letter arbitrarily shaped, like a gown or *peplos* casually arranged, or a sudden shift in an individual's mood or character."[6] It's form, certainly, but form "improvised, provisional, modifiable."

How close this definition comes to describing the archaic wave pattern itself, so quickly dismissed by the specialists as something "irregular." To the contrary, the potter was giving free play, no, not to his own whims and fancies but to the vibratory flow of yet unregulated energies. He was, we might call it, expressing himself in an ontological script: the calligraphy of *Logos* itself. The parallel lines he carved seem to spring—undulant—from some immediate if invisible point of origin. They rise, plummet, as if exult—convulsively—about the torso, say, of a terra-cotta vase. If anything, they seem, indeed, *alive.*

Here, momentarily, we're very close to a vision of existence that, rapidly suppressed, would have to wait two and a half millennia to see itself reasserted. How familiar the above must sound, in fact, to readers of Nietzche's *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* or—more immediately—Heidegger's *Being and Time.* We might be reminded, too, in the realm of modern aesthetics, of Paul Klee's definition of art as *Gestaltung:* as form in the perpetual process, or act, of formation. Or Charles Olson's interpretation of the poem as a "high-energy construct" in which "form is never more than an extension of content."[7] These, indeed, are archaic canons. Together, they share a common vision. Within that vision, the world (and the works by which that world is made manifest) erupts continuously out of an irrepressible point of origin. "An iridescent chaos," as Cézanne once put it: a place from which "the virginity of the world" might, once again, be experienced. Yes, an area that antecedes reference, coordinates, points of orientation; that refuses any form of pre-established measure in its protean capacity to generate—and perpetuate—all such measure.

The waves as if writhe. About the rims, shoulders, hips of so much earthenware, the pattern as if thrives in each of its fresh releases. As an artisanal conception, it celebrates the pre-conceptual. It speaks of a world that hasn't yet fallen under the dictates of human determinism. Spontaneous, convulsive, this original wave pattern, however, will adorn Ionico-Massalian pottery for a remarkably short period of time. Undergoing the influences of an emergent humanism, the pattern itself rapidly hardens. Codified into a band of identical, oscillating units, it will vanish altogether

as an expression of emergence. By the fifth century B.C., it will appear as little more than a script confined to so much mechanical repetition. It will have fallen victim, in short, to number.

This evolution follows, we'll quickly recognize, that of philosophy itself. Within half-a-century—from the time, that is, of Heraclitus and most Presocratics to that of Socrates— *rhitmos* would find itself redefined in an increasingly narrow manner. Plato himself would qualify rhythm as "the order of movement" manifested, say, by a dancer in so many measured, predetermined intervals. We've entered, indeed, the reign of *metron*. From an elemental vision of emergence, notions of number, of discrete units of articulated time increasingly predominate. The potter's hand can only follow. Indeed, in Henri Maldiney's words, "measure has introduced the idea of limit *(peras)* into the very midst of the limitless *(apeiron)*. Between these two extremes, the destiny of rhythm itself will unfold: will die, finally, from inertia, dissipation."[8] Will die, finally—we may safely conclude—with the Latin *cadare, cadentia,* the mechanical breath-fall of our own, unexpungable notions of "cadence."

With the ossification of the wave pattern, don't we become witnesses, in fact, to the cryptic birth of technology itself? Witnesses, that is, to a certain, technological ideation? Travelling from *Logos* to *Eidos,* haven't we reached—in an amazingly brief period of time—the very thresholds of concept? Reached, indeed, an order of thought that no longer needs to acknowledge its own origins, inception, emergence? In recognizing no antecedent, it cannot—in turn—generate sequence: translate energy. Static, self-sufficing, it can do little more, in fact, than replicate—*ex nihilo*—its own formulations.

How much of modern conceptual art today, we might ask ourselves, celebrates this very immobility? As if exults in its own, truncated vision? "Sad," Schiller will warn Hegel, "the empire of concept: out of a thousand changing forms, it will create but one: destitute, empty."[9] We see it, all too often, in galleries; read it, over and over, in postmodernist reviews; find ourselves increasingly exposed to an astonishingly similar, astonishingly rigid vision of existence. An art so deliberately sepulchral can only be, indeed, an end-art. Can only be, finally, a vain exercise in the service of a terminal aesthetics.

Here, though, for the moment, we're not concerned with endings but beginnings: with that auroral instant in Western civilization that would recognize itself, no, not in its mirrors but its waves: in the irrepressible flow of an inexhaustible dynamic: that of Being. Vectorial by nature, it would express itself in a multitude of ways. The archaic wave pattern happens to be one of such ways. As a signature, it ripples freely across the flanks of so much salvaged terra-cotta in its own, inimitable script forwards. It speaks—as it goes—pure transmission.

How can we help but marvel, today, in discovering one of those potsherds ourselves? At St. Blaise, for instance, after the winter rains, a fragment might ooze its way to the surface out of some excavated cross-section. What is it exactly, we might find ourselves asking? As we examine, for instance, the lash of two, three, irregular undulations, whipping their way across the all-too-abbreviated fragment, we might find ourselves repeating: what *is* it exactly if not current itself. If not the still living filament to a lost luminosity. If not, indeed, the limpid inscription that has somehow survived (like Heraclitus's fragments) its oracular discourse. Yes, we might find ourselves asking these very questions as we hold the potsherd between thumb and forefinger. Hold it, in fact, like some kind of key. Hold it like some very particular kind of key to some very particular kind of door. The door, alas, has long since vanished.

Notes

1 Here and throughout, I feel greatly indebted to Fernand Benoit for his seminal work *Recherches sur l'Hellénisation du Midi de la Gaule* (Aix-en-Provence, 1965).
2 Heraclitus, fragment 59.
3 *ibid,* fragment 41.
4 *ibid,* fragment 51.
5 Published in Problèmes de linguistique générale, I (Paris, 1966).
6 *ibid,* p. 333.
7 "Projective Verse," published in *Selected Writings* (New York, 1966), p. 16.
8 "L'Esthetique des rythmes" published in *Regard Parole Espace,* (Lausanne, 1973).
9 Schiller, *Tabulae Votivae,* quoted by Hegel in his introduction to *Lessons in Aesthetics.*

PAMELA WYE

AMY SILLMAN: KARMIC KABOB

The hyper-hybrid flora and fauna in Amy Sillman's drawings and paintings are in a perpetual state of transmigration. But rather than exchanging one identity for the next along the Karmic line, these palimpsest/paintings are mix n' match combo platters of all their past and future identities. As in "Flower Face," the inside of the body is also the outside, lungs are also wings, a thorny neck leads to a fiery heart in the place of a face. In fact, the central figure/deity in "Flower Face" seems born at the point where East meets West, where the Chakras meet the Sacred Heart.

Like an animated film of psychedelic transformations, Sillman's drawings and paintings move and change as our mind's eye reads the formal mutations born of incongruous couplings of body parts and floral ornamentation. Sillman's sensibility could be described as baroque slapstick sexual spirituality. Imagine Crumb as a Pennsylvania Dutch painter on an acid trip in India. The eye is on an adventure.

Fluidity is a key word in relation to Sillman's work—her forms transmutate with fluid ease; abdomens and organs are sac-shaped as though full or drained of vital fluids; and, formally, her arabesque line quality is about the fluid hand gesture of the artist. In the linear "Untitled," Sillman plays with the fluidity of the female pelvis, inscribing multiple vaginal canals and distended lip, and filling it with pendular sacs, reminiscent of Louise Bourgeois's or Petah Coyne's pendulous forms that describe clusters of impossible inner organs. In fact, Sillman seems to be working out her own body-based system of cardinal humors—a quasi philosophy/religion/science that makes of fluids and fluidity the cause and source of all human states—both physical and mental and hence responsible for the variety and complexity of the moods and states of mind that she renders in her work. Even her color is built up with thin layers of transparent stains that, when dried, leave only a retinal trace.

In "Bunnies," a nervous bunny wabbit with wings and bow tie crouches aside a phallus with rabbit ears, a face that is also a plant and tiny hands that hold what? entrails? (in a sac, in any case). These Rorschach tests act like mega-vitamin shots directly into the viewer's imagination, causing

a lush overabundance of interpretations. As a result, an anxiety of identity spreads like an oil slick through these works as though even the forms themselves, having given up any claim to coherence, would be hard-pressed to answer the query: animal? mineral? vegetal? friend? or foe? These works speak of a hunger for images, a voraciousness and, finally, an aggressiveness.

Sillman's color, regrettably absent from the current selection of reproductions, plays to the hilt the vibration game between complementary colors. As a result, the colors behave like an ecstatic sound track accompaniment to the rapid transmutations of forms. Sillman leads our mind's eye along a path we find satisfyingly familiar, then Whoops! pulls the rug out and draws the line into something different, foreign, jarring. We're forced to make new categories for life forms heretofore unknown to us—which, like any new experience, causes alternating states of anxiety and pleasure.

Sillman speaks of being from Chicago and of her fondness for the Chicago imagists, In particular the "Hairy Who" artists like Jim Nutt. Like Nutt's, Sillman's work is highly inventive, with an eye to the comics and kitsch and an affinity with the intensity of the art of the insane. Yet, unlike the work of, say, the schizophrenic artist Adolf Wölfli, where an hallucinatory multiplicity of forms is embedded within an obsessive fixity and symmetry of composition, Sillman's work is obsessively unfixed and fluid. And though Sillman plays with the formal devices of the decorative arts—she speaks of her earlier systematic use of floral patterns such as William Morris wallpaper, her current mode of decorativeness has slipped the ties of the repetitive pattern that usually locks the fluid forms in place.

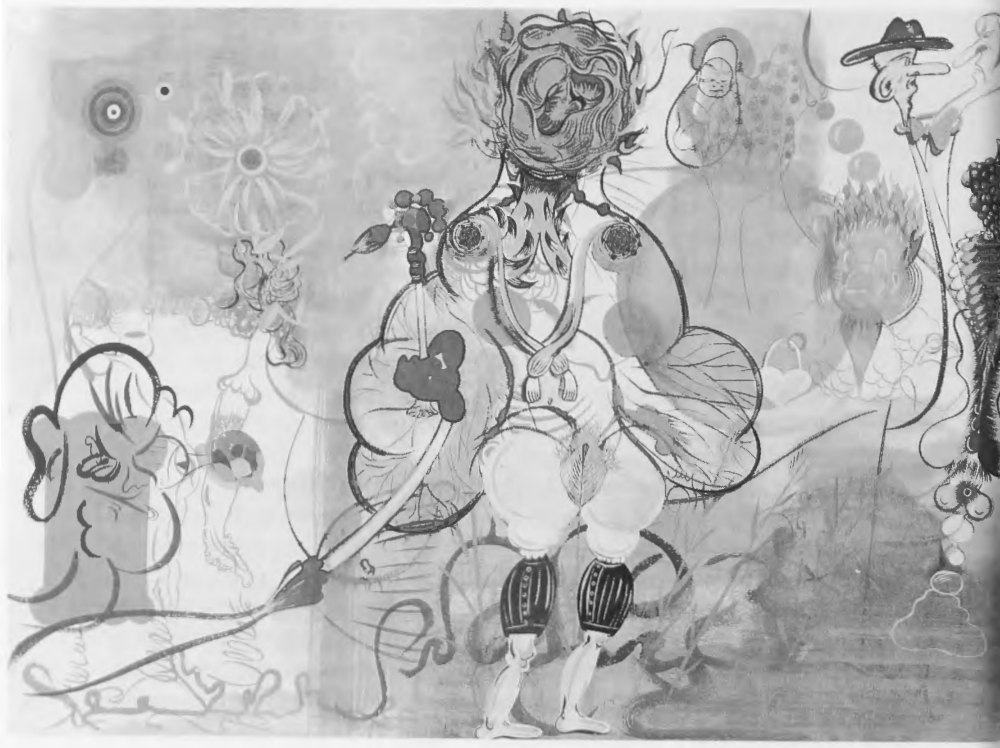
Like many in her generation, Sillman is engaged in a recombinant art-making process. High culture (Beauty, Art for Art's Sake, Truth) meets low kultcha (cartoons, the decorative arts, kitsch). Spirituality meets viscerality, the exalted meets the abject, the slapstick meets the ruthless and comes full circle.

"The Measles" has the sort of Jack-in-the-Box e(jack)ulate explosiveness that lays bare the aggressive scariness underlying much childhood toy or cartoon imagery. Boo! these Jacks-in-the-Box seem frozen in an adrenaline-laden moment of suddenness. As paintings, they're both gestural for gesture's sake (like the Abstract Expressionists, but on a more intimate scale) and gesture as descriptive of a surfeit of contradictory narrative possibilities. In looking at Sillman's hyperactive imagery, one can easily imagine the artist as overwrought child, inventing friends and foes within the swirls of her bedroom wallpaper.

New York, June, 1994

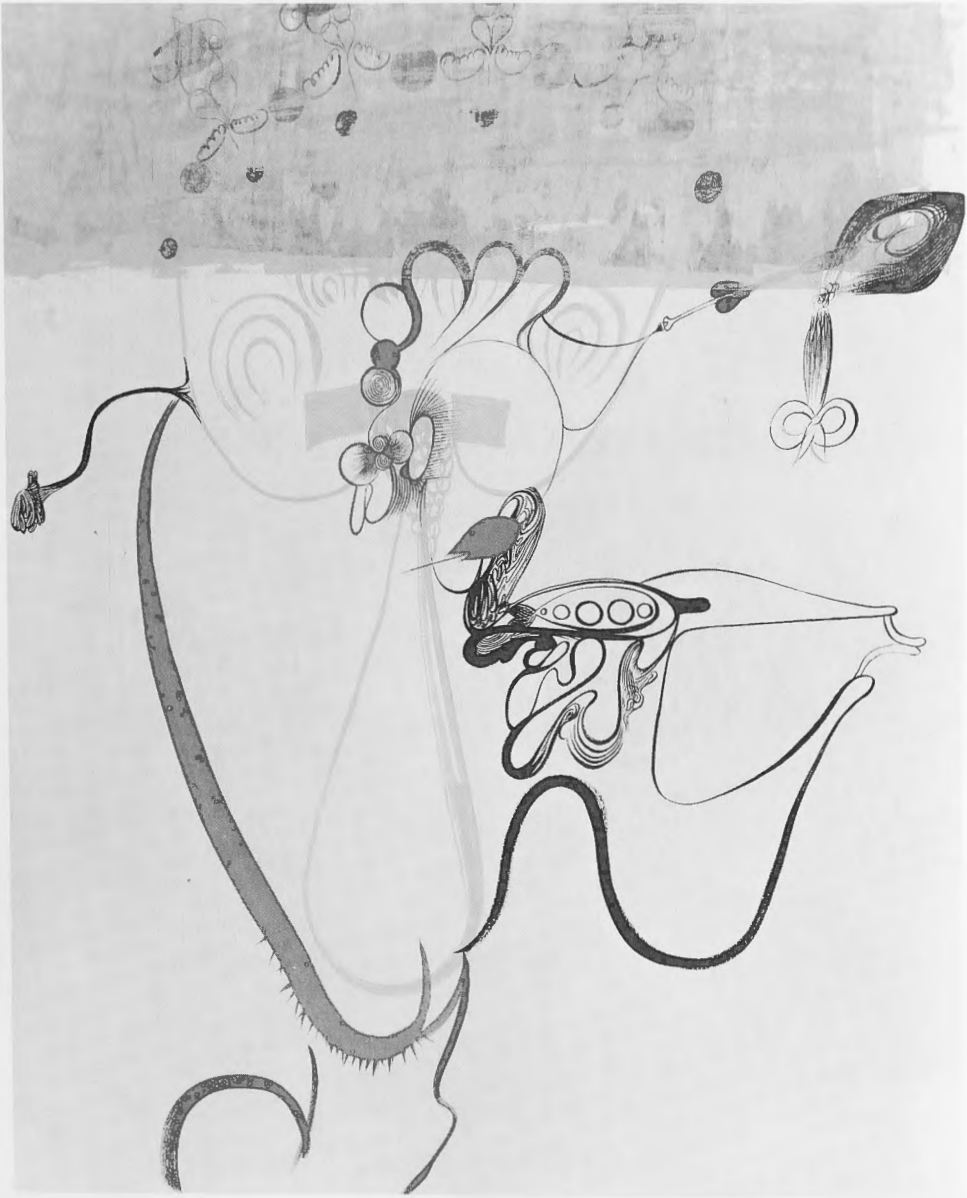
AMY SILLMAN

SIX GOUACHES



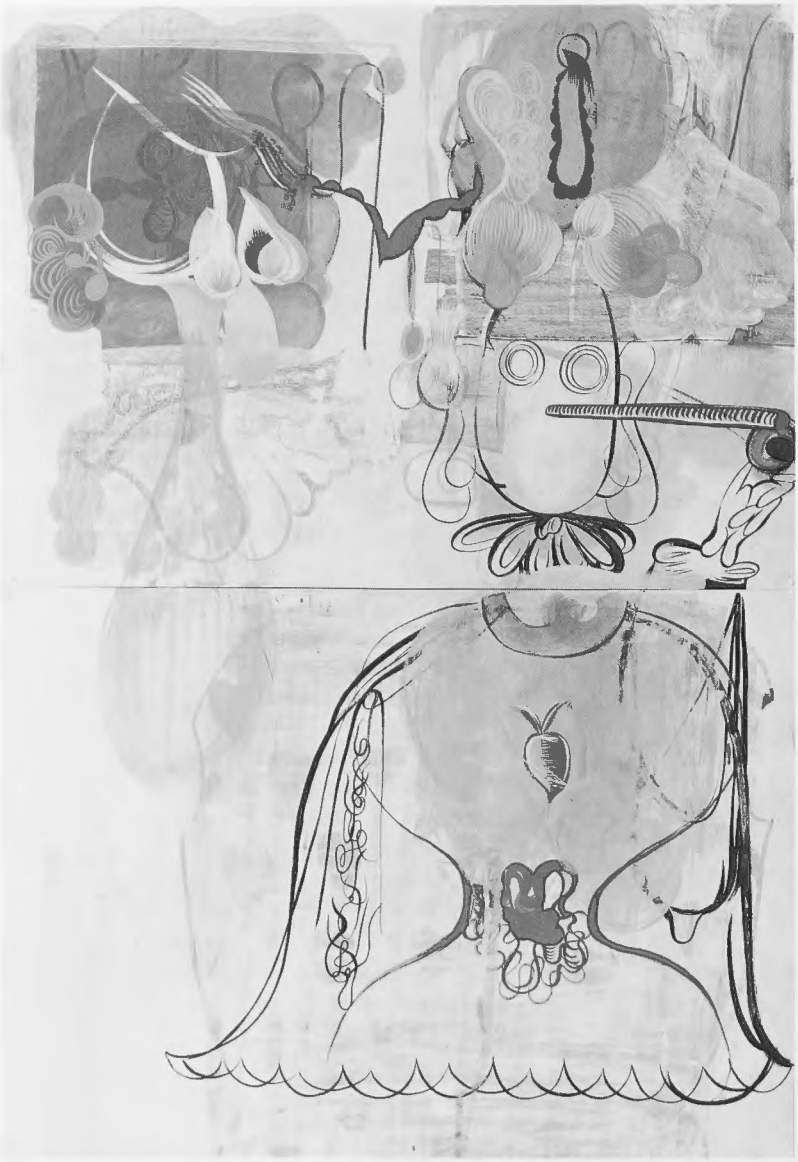
"FLOWER FACE"

1994, 30" x 48"



UNTITLED

1994, 20" x 26"

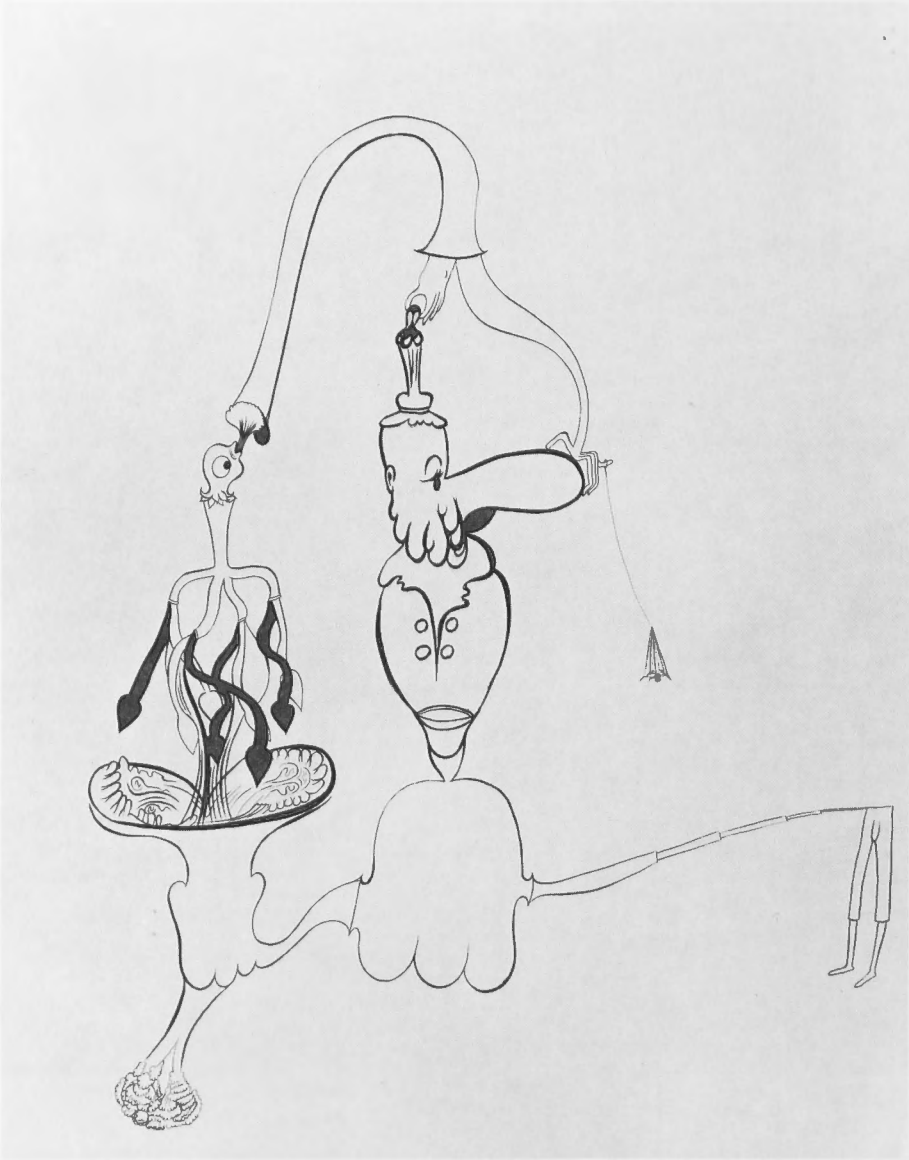


UNTITLED

1993, 30" x 48"

"BUNNIES"

1993, 24" x 30"



UNTITLED

1994, 20" x 26"

"THE MEASLES"

1994, 24" x 30"

ROBERT DUNCAN ON CHARLES OLSON

Introduced and Edited by Robert Bertholf

When Robert Duncan met Charles Olson in August 1947, while Olson was doing research on the Western Expansion at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, their conversation was about the domination of the cities of northern Russia over the southern farmland. The talk was not of poetry and poetic forms, but of politics and the vast movements of history. In the 1950s, when the correspondence between the two poets intensified, the discussion turned to poetry. Duncan's prose, published under the title "Pages from A Notebook," in *The Artist's View*, no. 5 (July 1953), prompted Olson to write his essay "Against Wisdom As Such," which was published in the first issue of *Black Mountain Review*, (Spring 1954). Far from causing a break between the two poets, Olson's essay remained a fertile provocation for Duncan's poetry and his thinking about poetry. He cited the essay in letters and in his own poems repeatedly, as he did Olson's essay "Projective Verse." The essay, "Notes on Poetics Regarding Olson's *Maximus*," was, in a sense, a response to Olson taking Duncan to task over the question of "wisdom" in the poem, but yet was also an enthusiastic response to Olson's poetry, which placed the work in a line from Joyce through contemporary painters. This was not Olson's place in intellectual history, yet it was Duncan's way of paying him the highest tribute by aligning him with his cherished lines of derivation.

The selection of letters presented here traces out some of the interaction of the essays of the 1950s, and then moves on to Olson's lectures on Whitehead in San Francisco, February 1957; and then to the Vancouver Poetry Conference. Olson, Duncan and Robert Creeley were together at that conference for the first time. That conference for Duncan confirmed his contemporaries—Olson, and Creeley and Denise Levertov. Questions of poetic form and the place of the poet in history come into these letters. The letters Duncan wrote from Mallorca are intense ones, filled with his reading of Joyce, and Blake, and then the reverie about a trip to Barcelona. While Duncan was at work on his "The H.D. Book," Duncan was immersed in the course of literary history, the lines of passage from the high modernist period to his group of contemporaries. One letter gives an elaborate chart of derivation. The final letter to Olson in December 1969 comes back again

to "Against Wisdom As Such" as a testimony to years of provocation into new areas of thinking and writing. Duncan was not influenced by Olson in any direct way: he was forced by Olson into a vivified sense of role and action of the poet.

All bracketed remarks are by Duncan himself.

ROBERT DUNCAN

AS AN INTRODUCTION (1972)*

The two decades from 1950 to 1970 were, for some of us, the Age of Olson. It was the experience of a conversion in Poetry, for me in a poetry that had already declared itself, of a conversion, that is, in the Imagination, a breakthru into a deeper going and intending Imagination. And he set large for us our "subject"—not the personal or the cultural, but the Nature and Identity (Id-Entity) of the species "Man."

The proposition of a new history of Man was there in 1947 with his *Call Me Ishmael,* with its vision of what we were as "Americans," a vision out of Melville, in which Olson saw the New World as, in truth, the Primordial, and men returning to this continent—a proposition of Man that extended "from Folsom cave to now"—the waves of pre-glacial and post-glacial migrations out of Asia, the adventuring voyages out from the Phoenician world, the Norse world, and then the Renaissance, as coming "home," "back" to their origins. "SPACE": "I spell it large because it comes large here," he wrote: "Large, and without mercy."

In 1950, the essay "Projective Verse;" in 1951, in *Origin* I, "I, Maximus" and "The Gate & the Center"—the opening up of great spaces in consciousness had begun, and in the very beginning, in its origins, he moves in, as he knows he must, to redirect the ideas of language and of the body, of Man, of commune, and of history; and this drive remains throughout his creative life. Sometimes it must have seemed hopeless. Every passionate and eloquent pouring forth of his vision goes on in those *Letters for Origin* to convert the editor of *Origin* from literary concerns to revelationary fervor. He finds himself at last (as in "A Work" in this little volume) clearing away all the literature of the Indo-European epic, coming to the Hesiod of the *Theogony* as "one of its gates:" "a total placement of man and things among all possibilities of creation."

"My purpose is only to wake up the time spans and materials lying behind Hesiod, so that they can seem freer than they have...." It had been his purpose in the beginning, in his own conversion-experience. The

*This essay will appear in *Robert Duncan, A Selected Prose,* which is forthcoming from New Directions. The essay was written in 1972 for a collection of Olson's prose, but it was not used.

awakening of Purpose. That so moves the phantasmal Kultur thing from the generative meaning of Ezra Pound's work; and so removes the phantasmal blood-thinking thing from the generative meaning of D.H. Lawrence, to form a tradition, a line of inheritance, incorporating long separated elements in a new force.

He saw the Westward movement of scouting, exploration, traffic with the natives, first settlements, raids and massacres, exploitations, scientific observations as a great psychic happening, a drive into the mythopoeic; and then the Ur-History does come back, not as it is in Europe, as a depth in memory, but as it is, for us, as an immediate disorder in the mind. We have no where else to be than here, in this first history, in which vast extensions of meaning, trance and phantasy, alchemistries of language, take over. He goes "back," back home, to come into the depths of the immediate, going over the documents and old maps, the texts of sciences and the historical diggings, as data of what our species is, read in the light and dark of a Divine Intention. He wants to establish us, to re-establish us in the Ideal, to redeem all idealism from the commitments that claim prior authority there. "Otherwise the present will lose what America is the inheritor of: a secularization which not only loses nothing of the divine but by seeing process in reality redeems all idealism from theocracy or mobocracy, whether it is rational or superstitious, whether it is democratic or socialism." To redeem Idealism as Primordial Thought, as a driving force. Charles Olson is a frontiersman in thought, grand and noble as the broad plains, the commanding mountains and the ocean depths and masses instruct him to be in certain measures of his poetry. He has no peers in this sweep of his imagination, in which every intention in him is ancient, and none are current or contemporary. He has the range of the continental drift or of the geological era he took his thought in. He can also be, as the continent was for those who first tackled it, as it remains for those who realize what is going on, a hard task-master. He *is* hard—hard going, hard to get at, hard to come by, hard driving, hard to read through; and he can go wild—shoot wild, talk wild, read wild. He was, after all, almost a man who might have been an eminent scholar in American studies, except for an ungovernable enthusiasm in which Idea went out of bounds. Except he went wild. He saw America as a dark and vast Fate to which Man returned, the Indians first, and then, since 1500, all the races of the species, Man Entire in His various cultures, HERE in one place, in one people. And there I am with Olson. He saw the power of a wilderness, not conquered, but invading Man, in which a crisis gathers. "The trouble is, it is very difficult, to be both a poet and an historian," he writes in his closing note to *Mayan Letters* in 1953. More and more, he came to mistrust the propriety of history.

The Creative Will, the urgency to make or name a "world," to make history or name history oneself ["man as himself a universe" Olson insists

in "A Work"] is haunted by the Identity, the Id-Entity, with God the Creator, which we can take now as an Idea, belonging to that Idealism freed from the authoritative limitations that Idea has been under from Plato on, in the philosophical "disciplines," the theological logics, the political dialectics, etc. that have sought to circumscribe Idea and make it subject to their uses. Idea, as it comes to us, as it comes to Man, as an immediate seeing, as seeing it that way. Straight on. The Creative Will is there, and where we are at all aware of ourselves, we immediately know it is there. This is the heart of Poetry in its proper sense, of Poetry as Making, as distinguished from voice or song, from the melic verse-record or the commemorative monument. The distinction is not absolute. The melodic is itself essential to the creative power. It *is* song that moves; song enters the world and makes it a singing environment of physical events. But what is important for the Maker is the direct charge of his making, a poetry that raises a crisis in What Is, a crisis in our Idea of the world and of what we are, a crisis in the body-idea—that is the crux of "Proprioception"—and in the identity of Man idea—that is the crux of "A Plausable 'Entry' for, like, man."

Charles Olson drives deep. He wanted not only a crisis in consciousness but a crisis in the unconscious. That word too he spelled large: "ex., Lawrence, preface, FANTASIA OF THE UNCONSCIOUS, where he imagines states of being & geography divers from the modern." "For those who have the wit to tell the Unconscious when they see one," he writes again in *Mayan Letters*. He is to be read by men who have their wits about them, the wit to tell the Unconscious "when they see one." And often, Olson is not only telling it from the Unconscious, or letting the Unconscious tell, but telling the Unconscious a thing or two. He means to instruct the Unconscious, and to do that he must stir such a trouble in all the structures of what he has known as Consciousness, all the established structures of what we take ourselves to be, that his instruction drives deep. "Neither the Unconscious nor Projection (here used to remove the false opposition of 'Conscious;' 'consciousness' is self) have a home unless the DEPTH implicit in physical being... is asserted, or found-out as such." Consciousness is God, the occult tradition says. "Consciousness is self," Olson puts it. In this vision, it is Consciousness that contains the Unconscious.

Move the verse-line out of the reach of our predilections of consciousness, especially hit at obstinate rationalizations of experience with the obdurate and the obscure task, drive the expert mind into that desperation in which it must struggle once more in wildness with the Old Man of the Sea, Proteus—this was the hope Olson had in Poetry. He hadn't a hope. It was the desperation he had. "To have a third term, so that *movement* or *action* is 'home'."

And he did bring it home. He brought to focus in a driving will and intellect a tradition. And that we have our roots, not in the old family farm

plot, or in the tribal smoke-house or in the national convention, but in a moving Idea of Man. The continent where we are is where that Idea is moving. As much the idea of Man moving in the Indian, as much the idea of Man moving in the European, we must gather to find ourselves. That is all the archaeology to gather ourselves from out of time and space into what we truly are, the archaeology of morning.

In "Bridge-Work" he names again a team as he sees it (1961) of challengers to the accepted idea that places any of us short of the business of Man. It is his essential reading list to undo our minds from the modern. Why? He insists upon just those carriers of a knowledge that has been systematically excluded from our education. We all know that Dante is a pre-eminent force of European civilization and that his *Commedia* is an essential event of Man's spirit in Poetry. But the entire system of public education excludes from our picture of European civilization any reference at all to the Jewish contribution to that world; hence it is viewed as an obscure reference to speak of Moses of Leon, a master of the same order as Dante in the Imagination, and as a peculiar and exotic "private mythology" to have to do with the *Zohar,* a work of the Imagination as far-reaching and deep-going in its influence in the thought and spirit of Europe as is Dante's Vision. Our generation has had the duty to carry in our work the content of an excluded knowledge, to work at a "bridge-work" between the repressed content and the Consciousness that is Self. Charles Olson must work at ground work as an educator against a massive and repressive construct in which all the sciences of Man outside of the post-Christian rationalizing science of "EUROPE" have been declared to be out-of-bounds. Blasting at indoctrination, Olson blasts with a thunderous indoctrination. He insists that it must be dogmatic. A Roman Catholic in origin, he transforms the meaning of Catholicity to mean just that—*katha holos,* having to do with the whole of Mankind, to be the idea of Man in the whole of Man. Where he waxes most dogmatic, speaking *ex cathedra,* the Protestant in me rises, and, deeper than Protestant, the heretic in me protests. But heretically, I see his dogmatic mode, as I read, as one aspect of Olson's genius that works in formulae, his mappings out of territories, his lists and topographies of the soul, his "Logography" as it appears in this collection. As he was dying of terminal cancer that had come into his liver and was eating away each day, Olson was writing out, as if to unlock in a logographic magic the secret message or to break the code of that event, "*LIVE-HER.*" He is trying words, to find in the body of the language he loved and worked in and incarnated himself in, this event that was eating at him. He had to know it in words, what he knew in flesh.

The great drive West was for Olson toward the Idea of Man, toward the vision of what each of us as Man is. Proprioception then, how we get the appropriate idea of what we are (who we are) in the feel of what the

body is, how the body knows itself, is the ground work of any right language of what Man is. In "Projective Verse," the knowledge of the art of Poetry is to be driven back there, to its own proprioception: "RIGHT HERE WHERE THE LINE IS BORN"—"the HEAD, by way of the EAR, to the SYLLABLE the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE." He is mapping out there in 1950 circuits and establishing the art in the reality of the body that intends that art. Here again Olson is profoundly Roman Catholic, and I am with him and with the Catholic doctrine in this: the Word is incarnate, living, suffering in the flesh, is Man, then. The Ideal has no other ground in which to be but our passional life in historical time. I know of no Ideal outside of that realm. The Incarnation is a physical event. "The 'soul' then is equally 'physical'," Olson writes in "Proprioception."

Forcing our recognition of the crisis, the crisis of our times or of our state or of our psyche, as the crisis of our physical body, the good doctor I see Charles Olson to be as poet-critic attends his patient and strives to bring him through to the moment of truth beyond the matter of life or death, up to the necessary test, beyond his strength to an other strength he has, to confront his living or dying. In the new medicine he is not to seek to escape what is happening but to go into it. Health here lies in the body of the total life, in the soul as a life-time, and self as a consciousness of where that is, toward which the creative will and from which the creative will moves. He would not relieve us of this confrontation.

Sensibility, as I read it, Olson insists is not "ours" but "its own" [within the organism by movement of tissues "its own"]. We've to realize the cosmic intent or event that the physical body we call "ours" is "as object which spontaneously or of its own order produces experience;" and that depth is "asserted, or found out as such... implicit in physical being." The thing is we have just this physical event we are, an incarnation, a body, a locality of cosmos having in that locality an experience of "confronting" cosmos, in which our life, our experience of the actual, springs alive. Metaphysics then is the mind's proprioception of its physical condition—a local and immediate event imagining the totality that comes to crisis in that event. And metaphysics only proves true as it is imagined as physics. The problems of metapsychology are ultimately to be read in a physics we have not come to. Hence, Olson's persistent interest in alchemical terms. Body, logos, society, history, as I read him, must be brought to this door of the physical fact, of Incarnation.

He forces us, if we are to read at all—as once in the Hellenistic period men were forced to such business and, the best they could tell us, saw action as agon—to be involved, if we are to participate at all at the level of self-consciousness, with finding ourselves in such primaries. In his early essay "The Gate & the Center" he argues that men once had in Sumer such a "home" as later Olson is to tell us we must take in movement; that the

City was the action, the incarnate body of man's action in history, the one center. What we enact comes into being in the act itself, has no other place to be. I've not to be right or wrong here, I've to move forward to the way it appears to me. We are creatures of the physical world and in that creature nature are impelled to create. We have no other "consciousness" except the consciousness of the act. Hence the making in words, the enactment of laws or poems.

In "The hinges of civilization to be put back on the door" or in "A Plausible Entry'" Olson is not making an historical outline of what happened in the past but is making a diagram of what we Are, a morphological anatomy of our body in time. What we have to do, our body in time, carries with it crises. "We" are the body of man that remains unsatisfied, unrealized, of impending disasters or creative breakthrus then, redemptions of form, we're still that much involved with the impetus. In the earliest traces of man we find, we find that imperative that will not let us go. To uncover city, man, trace, being that involvement that will not let the past go but must bring all into the present demand for consciousness in action. And action, the truth of action, brings us into the Primordial, into the place where the New is yet to happen. The "past" is all that has not happened. We are, where we are, at the threshold of the First Things, the as yet to begin. "God is the organ of novelty," we find in Olson's "Theory of Society." In all of this thought, Olson is close indeed to his reading of Whitehead's *Process and Reality* in 1956-57.

Grammar again is not a system but a formulization toward involvement in what impends. It must be moving or not at all. Sapir and Whorf (I know of no others of this order in linguistics) are kindred to Olson in this stance toward language as being poetic, creative, a matter of process, as a way in moving. This "way" is for Olson an imperative.

Then, last, to say that these essays are not to be taken as summaries or notes of something known, but as the push, from knowing, toward such action. I would like to escape that inner alliance I have made in taking what I have of Olson's thought—the urgency of his directive renders it impossible to read his poetry or prose in the mode, still the dominant literary mode of our time, of disinterested discourse. Since the early fifties when what Olson was about gradually began to dawn for me, what I am about myself has been seen in a new way in that light, in the light of his thought and in the dark of that thought. And I read it today, as I read it when I first got it, as a call to order. The only alternative has sometimes seemed to be at home in that waste called Tiamat. "Superstition & idolatry also rampant: anything can happen (BS" Olson warns).

"Costly in loss of something the 1st, as later the 15th & 16th still held, a sense of the divine" and later—we have cited this before—"a secularization which not only loses nothing of the divine but by seeing process in

reality redeems all idealism." The crisis we face seems to be there—or else to flounder in psychology, sociology, and what Olson points out as the greatest danger, "the area of pseudo-sensibility," the disengagement of entertaining the idea of the world, as if we had no consequence in that entertainment.

ROBERT DUNCAN

ELEVEN LETTERS

[San Francisco]
[ca 15 December 1953]

near-far Mister Olson![1] I have two books on my table—In Cold Hell in Thicket—which has been a constant companion, increasing (as if it were possible) joy, and renewal to my intellectual heart's craving—and now Maximus Poems/1-10 which Patchen presented me with two days ago.[2] 'near' means everything indeed; a slowly increasing centerness of what you have been writing, retroactive and for several months now the excitement has been on. Say—early pieces came around the corner of the eye, spoke in the background of the ear, seemd incidental. Then a shifting of the sights and a tuning of the ears bring the Olson intellectual heart into range. These pieces in scatterd magazines and these books now are those "friends coming from far quarters" that Confucius finds one of three civilized pleasures. It is the containd Effort—another of the three pleasures—the "constant perseverance and application" of young birds learning flying on the wing—and the perspective "containd"—the third that is everywhere and every thing.

A very structure of act, a speech as learnd in the hand-ear-to-mouth as walking, an athletic language. Because all here is the purpose of the poet there is no discouragement: that you have such technical achievement compared to my often inadequacy there is every encouragement, heartening: to be free! and I am as I speak.

What more central love than the disturbance and trembling awakend by each new song; the calling up of one's own spirit in answer, the still center in the excitement that comes as the poems are comprehended. A challenge. But to the intoxicated mind a more marvellous alcohol—a nourishment. Of my own otherness. My entirely differentness. It's the coming back to the core of speech—that poetry might be a revelation of the language written by, created by Man—a closet of speech wherein one speaks with the vastest spirit—a revelation of language not personality. What more central love than the comradeship in devotion to the art?

Then, but it is not central yet, it is still coming in view, another devotion. The wisdom we seek. The counsels of the language. The purpose, the effort—is part of the wisdom. "One loves only form. . . ." or love, the sense of the form—a form itself—a created thing. "It is elements men stand in the midst of"—what we are. . . "did you know, she sd., growing up there,/ how rare it was?" citizens of a language—"go sing" "you who also wants."

But why "come home a winner?" yet one knows that that course one has been winning in the poem is not the race—is the course one has been running, winning not the course but the awareness of it, the revelation "as much of a labor/ as to lift an arm /flawlessly"—how that quickened my scents—the effort—but with flaw as without flaw. . . a wonder.

"To live our life quite properly in print" over and against my "I write to exercise my faculties" a kin? "only eyes in each head"

digesting Maximus this
is like writing a poem, that kind
of listening to the words, almost
catching them but throwing them into e-motion.

One sees the configuration of Gloucester: and qualities of men—self-containd, devoted "as mastheadsmen," in the element of an art—fishing-or staring at Ferrini's magazine cover, at all magazine covers in the Waiting Station—the demand for a poetry that can be tested by the measure of their living—a field of tansy. And it is the measure, the test for a poetry, the imaginary audience that one subscribes. One shld meet eye to eye—yes—so designd to be inspected. (But an imaginary audience of the lotophagoi? of sensation mongers? a trick—I am among the devious)
but
it is the Maximus who urges us.
"seeking too ready ears" "who want to lie down/
in Tiamat."[3]

close to Paterson? yes—and there be a root
in the Cantos, in Paterson that is hardy stock
—a direction in poetry—

RD
San Francisco
January(?) 1954

[San Francisco]
17 June [1954]

Dear Olson/ I am driven by the need for correspondences to make (or attempt) for the first time a primitive allotment of the day—with its period (the early morning) for letters; it (the need) is backlog piling up, pushing against some months now. I had returned to typing-money pleasures America's own version of the slave camp; and for a year have sufferd under & in the self-destructive slop-drama. Today then (June 17) I have rudely disrupted that course—and the jam of logs is shifting (nerves shifting, eager for the current of speech).

Thus—to make my beginning. John Adams writes "I will rouse up my mind and fix my attention."[4] And had that task of arousing himself to do, with a rigor, before he find himself. In your "PROJECTIVE VERSE"—the drive toward a maximum energy—an exertion in the works of it, measured phrases to drive, the engine designd wise movement: instructive each time at a level vital within "what yare saying.

Writing the letter to you about your work and then seeing it again, as you suggested it, to be printed, I thot of it in the context. I was sure of a critical response to the Maximus letters. Now "they" must go back, it ran, to sum up, to sit up, to set up their guns. All for or against this. But we see now that the current runs underground; it does not decrease the excitement that these signs of new (re-newd) life in the language do not appear (tho be thrust in the faces of) upon the surfaces of this literary world of not-critical criticism.

All the academy that despised here my ardent consultation of the Cantos (as a breaking up into movement of the old log-piles) now address themselves to sorting, identifying, deifying the old log piles to spite the energy set thereabout to break it up.[5] Only Stein remains freshly disreputable. And the "objectivists," "dadaists" and "surrealists" (of the absolute order—Breton, Tzara, Magritte, Peret) indigestible to the professional readers.[6] They demand "the unique presence," the actuality: beyond/ before the "image"—I don't have right at hand the files of *Origin* but someplace there-abouts you bolsterd up my growing adherence to thingness. This is a box with nothing inside but the inside inside. All the Pandora's woes and hopes—the glamours—to be let go; for the otherness.

Well. A Pandora's box-full of stagnant pre-occupations to be cleared away; for the clear in-sight hear-say testimony in act to "raise up and fix." William's sight of Curie working at the muddle of pitchblend / one's apprehension of the secret energies of the speech.[7] To clear away one's own secrets [the miasma] toward the work at the source—all the containd human energies of the language.

The mythic content has been released to use—Freud, Joyce, Graves, Pound, Croce, Jane Harrison, Cassirer—plenty of ready work done.[8]

Stevens' demonstrations of mythy construction. Then you prodded well at my "wisdom" (re. *Artists View*) toward the act-ual sense. (In Harrison's *Themis* the effort was to point back of the seem of the myth to the actual, the *dpomena*—thing done. Back of the reference to; to the taking place. And an observation re: energy inherent in her study—that the energy *is* in the thing done; appears as derived there from in the re-currences (the ritual reenactments), further derived (lessend) in the references there-to—the mythic constructions. But is embodied in the language—(Diff. between the act as contained (energy) in its words, as evoked by its words (a memory of that energy, seeming charged), as exploited in history (a reference to that energy). Thus; I ex-Pound. And you will allow my delight in calling up your presence / company (tenuous only when I reflect upon the alternative of your actual company. And talking to, at, (tenuous against a vividly with) you to release currents of my thot. It hardly stirs against, to break up—as I would—very old channels. I wld. seize at the least breach of its con-duct. To have a sign of Jerusalem.

As for instance—a flash-sight in/beyond E.P.'s old rut of *Social Credit* that the language is a social fund, an air, water, earth or fire, an elemental wealth in which we, any, all have a social credit: unbounded.[9] To claim. Inspiration (in breathing) currents, roots and light/heat.

What a mud—a pitchblend—those recalcitrant pamphlets are, a crisis where we are forced to all the damnd (the unmoving backlog) wall of his mind he drives in inspite of against. But then toward? To? And everything not there springs up to mind To

> "tell you / what any knowing man of your city might, a letter carrier, say, or that doctor—

"but "if they dared afford to take the risk—"[10]

Our joy is that impending—here—we calld for it, it calls for us, that "dared afford" grows, increases, changes over is—a necessity. No other art but to "take the risk."

And E.P. (they kalld him a cracker-box filosofer) driven to the risk, unprepared. But it is not an occasion for accomplishment, but a necessity that drives him, I, the letter carrier to write the pamphlet. To do it "corony," to force the damn (nation) that the waters be released.

The task is there—beyond giving *Testimony* that I recognized, at last, what you are about (given in the letter you forwarded to *Origin*)—to write out what these two books of yours point toward. And I mean "to rouse up my mind and fix my attention." Done, you tell and I'll tell Creeley this is not in your services (not an affair of the sheer camaraderie) but obviously (no one ain't taken no intrust) a necessity. A what are we doing here. Can't distinguish twixt a critical task and a "age-of-criticism and chewing cow-

licking exercise, an old habit"—it's a sad day a coming. If it is we is a literary movement with our fortunes to win I gladly default. My ever omnipotent laziness is healthy instructual recourse there. But if it is there might be, even if only in—as if accident—an accidence, a spark from that flinty task to arouse us, get a move on, it's to be done.

I have in mind mimeographing said summing up of your work—say circa 200 copies to be maild out to a critical "elite" of readers—I mean those letter carriers and doktors where we have come to recognize their readiness. "In the third place the third capital is aroused"—Stein[11]

Yrs for a call to arms
R.D.

[San Francisco]
[8 August 1954]

Dear Olson—I picked up Black Mt. Review at the Pocket Book Shop and read the "Wisdom as Such" piece.[12] If it reprimands in part I ain't going to rise in defense of my bewilderings—this matter of clarification is too important and, if there were no other measure of it, I shld. say that it is the keener excitement in writing backs up your point.

But moral urgency, the hearty man-to-man gusto—might also dissemble? Anyway: the whole realm of spirit I distrust if it is not at play—and a play is a sleight-of-mind, dissembling in that sense—I wld. not disown it. "Love, wisdom, suffering, foolishness, truth, false pleasures" etc. etc. "I'm so foolish" you permit yourself to say. Arbitrary: we can lay claim to love, wisdom, suffering, foolishness, true and false pleasures at will. And that in part was the demonstration of the *Artist's View* pieces.[13]

item: Martin Seymour-Smith's comments on Roethke and his "importance" and on Dylan Thomas are not "ideas at play" but proceed "importantly" to talk about importance; to distinguish true from false importance.[14] So M.S.S. agrees with the other critics on the importance, and has only the virtue of seeing that he ain't important—the virtue the more vicious for his disinterest in what Roethke or, or, or etc. actually is.

Is a titmouse bigger than a hellaphunt. or why shld. he be? Or wld he save us if he were?

Now to get back to the starting point.
First to go on record:
Knowledge and control (don't mean domination) in actual life is subject to an unremitting clarification. For motion to be free and energies just here . . .the real must be distinguishd from the unreal. Things must be discriminated and acknowledged.
—Sects, religions, platonics etc. don't countenance it:. . . wld. rather fuck a dream walking than actually fuck. And they lead to all kinds of clarifications about what it is like to fuck a dream but fewer about the act.

But in made-up things, in the imagination the will has range of a different kind. Words like genuine and false, truth and lie, up and down (where there is nor up nor down as it's named), great and small are anything and everything we design.

—item—when someone sez this is genuine marble, tap-tap, hammer, chip: genuine marble. It is or it ain't. If a man (equipped with standard apparatus) sez I'm a woman we can see if he "really" is or if he only "make-believe" is. If a line in a poem is ten syllables long we can see (hear) if it "really " is; also mit rhyme, breath groups, movement. We tell "really" with tongue, skin-touch, eyes, "sounding, " ear etc. The mixing here correlates: the senses discover.

—item—when someone sez this is a genuine talent, poet, poem, artist, saint, lady, or some such realist assertion of the make believe, we must either agree or disagree. There is no data.

The giant-bodied I may be the world
    but the actual world is the actual world including me.
Yr. "that any wisdom which gets into any poem is solely a quality of the moment of time in which there might happen to be wisdoms. . ." clears the way in part I think—for me: this is a mountain seen changing only in aspect as one regards it, walking around it. Mountain shows itself grand, small, ridiculous (a vast suggestion of a trivial resemblance, a frivolous head), austere, comfortable.

As in all these exhortations of yrs, the urgency disaffects but it also—and this, its *virtu*.—disrupts. Disjoins habitual attitudes. "That he is not free to be a part of, or to be any, sect"—there, as man, I am disaffected—and even "fierce about it" I demand whatever free range. But it is the *poem* that is not

free to be part of sect, that is thereby vitiated. And I am as heartily for yr "no symbols" (*symbols* arise from violations of the mystery of *things* (and you have elsewhere, again after my own sense of it, calld for the "thing") and "there are only his own composed forms" yes and "each one solely the issue of the time of" yes yes and "not any ultimate" yeah man.

—Well, I have another section on notes on *Maximus* underway. I have to read the poem over and over again to re-focus each time. And since I'm trying to write about the view of man in the poem I have to weed about in my anarchist prejudiced mind to get back to the poem. Not anyway an unrewarding engagement.

But "a man-made continuum" will perhaps provide a new sight on the subject.

For my own response to Black Mt. Review—the thing is split in two. Items: La Cosa, Against Wisdom as Such; The Quay; Lacquerd Westmount Doll; The Search, The Assistance; René Laubiès: An introduction;—Laubiès work (tho half-tones miss one suspects all-important densities, and hence much of what is going on); A Fete; Round the Year Jazz; the John Smith piece, and C.C.'s (Corman's?) Yeats (for "that ridiculous hallucinatory cat, knocks it erratically around the parlor"—and the quote from Yeats on Lewis)—these all give rise to, seed, impulse to forms.[15] But there is another sort: of the worst. Martin Seymour-Smith, A.M. on Canadian poetry, none of these are concerned with what is happening—all are concernd with critical evaluation.

And. . . is the *Black Mountain Review* going to be concernd with whether or how Mr. Roethke, Mr. Steinbeck, Mr. Thomas are or are not legitimate literachure? Is it really legitimate "to speak of Patchen himself, " when it means no study of the writing at all?

I ain't interested in whether Patchen is good or bad writing. I want to know about what is going on, how it is made. If Patchen's wreckd back reappears in the physiology of the poem (as for instance Miss Josephine Miles' wreckd body reappears in the physiology of hers—an all but incapable body out of which must look cunning eyes.)—then O.K.[16] But as Creeley excites any interest in the "pain" it is sentimental.

My cross-eyedness, for instance has a lot to do with the physiology of my poetry—but I shld. be outraged (as regards the poetry) if some critic shld. care to commiserate for what my oculist refers to as the "cosmetic" handicap.

All of which belongs in a letter to Creeley.

So much studying out and calling attention to how a poetry is, can be, "ought to be "(that's your urgency), might be made. Redirections of the writer to such form, composition in time, melody, fragmentation, disruption, blockings, channelings, designs, decorations, arrangements, markings, machineries, periodic structures, relations of syllable, accent, breathing and forced groupings are needed that this ("I am among the devious") one given often to "false pleasures" can carry no compromise that far. These idea-less cerebrations are displeasures, be they false or true. But displeasure can be of greatest value—as displeasures disrupt into life of answering from sloth or habitual pleasures.

Point is dis or pleasure—"*Where is Mr. Roethke?*" is incompetent but more important it is so much not the affair of anyone faced with the task at hand. (You might get at the task by clearing the *Cantos*, *Paterson*, or *Maximus* or my own work at this point out of the way—but you won't find yrself anywhere I is going after clearing Roethke, or Thomas out of the way).

Patchen or Rexroth are in my way.

Right at the moment you are more in my way (as sympathies, identifications, common attitudes block the view) and hence struggling with *Maximus*. . .

But Creeley takes Patchen for granted, clears no way beyond. Maybe Patchen is not blocking his (Creeley's view).

The kind of criticism needed is not "The Contribution of Mr. Pound in the *Cantos* "but" what we now see is needed after the *Cantos* have been committed.

And then, one's own poetry is most in ones way.

No question mark.

Don't need ironical "possibility" to say what that said. with that confidence that is a certain part of love that may be understood

Duncan

It has been the fullest reward of my services to the POETRY CENTER (where, unpaid, I conduct a workshop) that I may see you once more.

Bañalbufar, Mallorca
14 agosto 1955

dear Olson /

Stevens is dead, the news comes.[17] Well, it's the Stevens and back of him the shadowy Mallarmé that seems to me to haunt my work, Keres from his world scuttering in to attend the seance of each poem.[18] The poem anyway being not only made but heard, so that one is listening, the line comes to one, as much as one is inventing, as cuts, or measures into the line. I just spent a week in Barcelona—which meant four hours again going over the Catalan romanesque frescos and sculptures, and another four at the archeological museum—and beginning, just beginning, to get the feel of a world emerging[19] (as this world here emerges little by little as one learns its language. . . will only be there I know when I have got the worlds (words), the contour of, into my system). There are two interlapping pictures from these two collections: the one extending from cave scratchings, flints and wood charrings, lion, bear, hyena, horse and elephant jaws, thru megalithic cultures (the dolmen makers not only swept down thru Spain but invaded Mallorca, leaving Stonehenges and cairns), grave remains where the most elegant Carthaginian beads and blue-glaze amulets of Bast accompany primitive native pottery. Ibiza was a Carthaginian colony and the ceramic figures from this period are magnificant[20]. This goddess crownd with the walld imperishable city clutches in one hand to her breast a miniature lamb—in time we see her again holding the miniature child-lamb. What have any of us who aint shepherds got to do with this thing? Something, some insistent thing, because the images bring back ¿out of what memory? the sheep. As the lion, bear, hyena, horse and elephant rise up into feeling from their jawbones. (On a stone from the cave world, over and over again scratchd horse and elephant; on a stone lintel from XIIth century graphite it shows scratchd horses and knights, city walls and buildings—which have not yet emerged in the frescos).

But it is in the masterpieces of the medieval culture that an epiphany comes

12th century San Roman de las Bons shows[21]
apostles
their eyes obsessd with sight
ears obsessd with the word as: 1123 circa
the great apse of Santa Maria de Tahull
Christ Pantokrator holds
the book the Word
the world then
enthroned: *ego sum lux mundi*
the A & W the throne

the book the light
surrounded by evangelical beasts &
great wingd many-eyed seraphim

—but the epiphany (mine) is that just here a complex iconography (where all images are signs) is brought into a complex plastic knowledge (where the two dimensions of the fresco, and the symbolic many dimensions of what is represented, and the three dimensions of the architecture—the apse is semicircular—provide spatial counter-points with the advancing and receding of forms and colors). You see at a glance a created space, which being drawn, draws. And—the exhilaration of the maker is so keen—see the created time of a poem and that as the plastic feeling be complex there, then needs—for this exhilaration—a likewise complex iconography.

Wherever the spatial knowledge does not exist, the iconography does not exist. The images are not signs and with the "renaissance" everything is lost of the order; the icons are humanize[d] and became idols; the terror and majesty of the romanesque is superseded by [ ] and luxury;[22] the painter at Tahull finds in the robes an agency of color and movement—so that draperies swirl to make new spaces / the robes in the 15th century chapel of Lluis Dalmau (who paints after the flemish model) reveal shine and glow of their expense.[23]

¿"the giant bodied spirit I"? the thing as I see it between you, me, Bob and this Pantokrator, lux mundi / is just that the forms—the meanings—lux, mundi, pan—have changed. What we believe them to be as surely as the painter of this Christ enthroned upon the world globe believed this to be the cosmos. The created thing then, as now, emerges from the thing seen (the painter's necessary book), the thing embodied as a sign in the thing seen/heard (the book, the word, and the letters—the world emerges from vowels and consonants), and the thing as heard (the musician's necessary book—and hence here the trumpet, the harpes and luthes).

But insist upon the central picture, that one hold in one hand as this christ the open book, and the other hand raised in benediction. This excess of feeling lasted, even here—when in these country churches it flowerd—only two hundred years; the real fine exhilaration is only there in a generation of painters at the beginning of the 12th century. Works up to this giantism. And then ennui, humanism, and "proportion" have their run. Revelation is followd by illustration or description.

In 1920 Stravinsky composed his *Symphony of Wind Instruments* in homage to Debussy upon his death (as Manual de Falla did at that time).[24] A composer could have done a funeral piece / but the appropriate homage is a demonstration—in Stravinsky's case he anticipated 12 tone construction. It is that the work not be *about* the addressd master but that it be a demonstration *for* his spirit. And in this sense I would design a piece for

Stevens. It gives me at least the challenge of the invention. If I can do it—to attempt however it goes—two theoretical inventions! to measure silences in the time of composition, and to work from an arbitrary series of points in the time of composition rather than "beginning at the beginning."

Gradually recent work is coming into book shape. Once I had the title LETTERS, it was clear. From the Letter to Denise Levertov (but I mean to remove the "letter" aspect, any dedications, in order to make clear the letters vowels and consonants of it) thru to a projected second letter to Denise. Much of the work for the book will appear if ORIGIN continues in an issue, granted again that Corman means what he sez. It's this book anyway that will be for Jonathan if he manages to perform his other announcements.

with old affections,

Robert

[ask Bob, what about using my notes on *Maximus* as [missing word] for the *Books & Comment* section of #6? I am sending your *Anecdotes of the Late War* to Jonathan as requested in his postcard of this week.[25]

[Bañalbufar
Mallorca]
29 agosto 55

dear Charles /

The established iconography—what Dodds in *The Greeks and the Irrational* calls the conglomerate,[26] or for a psychological view the gestalt—as you have it instructs to avert (as a city it seemd to me when we talkd together so many years ago is it now—is to hold back the dark and not just the dark, an expanded cave fire, fear-full anyway) and to produce. And I found myself puzzling as you puzzled and came up with a distinction between those things at La Bons and Tahull that had seemd to speak to me as another world speaks; to instruct me again what this mystery of making might be: and those *things* (I dont have no library here to locate where but you've said out much of this business of the *thing)*, traces from whose spoor the life of the making, what kind of a life it was, leaps to us. It's no choice between the two—the difference is so wide. Or its inside and outside. And here you are in the letter which arrived today with the best I could be waiting for, well, with what unlocks thought—that the religious

thing is this *practice* of the outside and the inside / to learn, as surely as we learn to walk (which is simultaneously by a practice of the inside and the outside, of the ear-organ of equilibrium i.e.) to dare to exist.

But what I've got in mind in conversation with you is a note to my enthusiasm for the hierarchically arranged thing. I dont get to it in the notes so far on *Maximus,* but I heartedly, by heart, agree with you that "There are no hierarchies" or it could come as an agonized cry from this man glamorized, [27] in love with the great wheels of cultures "There are only hierarchies!" And we've both of us, got Grandpa to thank for our way station of the ideogram (which allows for movement as the iconography doesnt, for individual discovery). I'm no[w] in mind to have done with the glamors of history or of arrangements, but now I begin to see that while how to arrange to release powers is a vital struggle when my organism was new (and actually struggling toward a definite arrangement), the struggle now is to disrupt the inertias that fall into place. The fight begins to be to "release them," to release the configurations from name and place (and hence I, tho there are other reasons, pursue Stein); the dynamics of the making needs as much incoherence (incorporation of natural inability, corrupt flesh etc.) as it needs coherence (genius, skeleton etc).

The picture that I gave of Tahull came from my centering with awe upon the achievement of the apse, the hierarchic, the arranged thing. But reconstructed, the church had another movement, figures as large as to be contradictory to the giantism of the iconographic thing—that is men dying, devourd by animals, or witnessing, or fighting. (the plough excluded?).

[in left margin] The thing or things I'm after is to chase down the celtic and germanic art—there's lots in Spain—hinterlands of 500 BC-500 AD—with Sythian overtones.

The important thing for me is in these "masterpieces" just that, that they are masters to me in learning the art; and that now I begin to see that they are a comfort too, because I read in them that there have been others who would have been makers. It's not the only human appetite, certainly not a universal or very common human appetite, but we've got it, thee and me and our small company; and as surely as men have handed down the "secret" of fire, or of how to work the soil, this how to work the life or the living is handed down. Well, what I have in mind is that that hand to avert and to produce as it signs, signs also a benediction, and that the benediction I feel is the maker-to-maker (and since they were enthroning, the King is a Maker). There's a Hell of a lot of art that doesnt bless like this, that curses the sights out of the initiate, or that even thinks of itself, of making as a sin. There are periods when all trace of the "brotherhood" seems lost. And then

you have things like the way the Brontes thought out the structure of the novel, and the great fraternity of novelists in the 19th century (and extending thru Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, in the 20th)—Or there's the other certainty of being able to read thru from Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson, Thoreau to the Jameses and to Dewey with a continuity. Or there's Yeats at his seance table calling up Swift and Blake; or Joyce, likewise, these Irish, calling up Vico and Bruno and Dr. Levy-Bruhl—for a conversation.

Without a feeling of his craft brotherhood, and recognition of his masters, a man falls away from an art unless driven thereto mightily. But I have already seen painters and poets dwindle away into professors and magazine editors, or run away from their arts, precisely because they were *theirs.*

All this—with the interruption in which I was deep in a summer cold, lying in a sweat and taking some cure in reading again Cantos 85, 86, 87 and realizing that some of these ideograms are coming into my language. Then a friend from Berkeley sends a clipping from the E. P. Newsletter with note that in the next issue they will have letters for his 70th birthday & would I send some.[28] But I've a question as to whether the Newsletter is the appropriate place and time; I think I would rather send directly to him myself.

Rumaker's stuff arrived; and I'm a bit uninformed as to what exactly I am to do. In what form to send an o.k. as examiner, I mean; because I don't see why not that. But then, as I shall be writing Bob and at more length—these pieces give me a slim idea of his mind. Isn't there something more important than the O.K. for graduating or passing or whatever? There's the does he know the first thing, or his first thing about his art? I'd want to know what he thought writing was about, as well as who did he think did it well enough to be his particular masters. And then too, if he thought something was happening or needed to be happening in this short story form; and if not, why write etc.

yrs. etc.
Duncan

[San Francisco]
June 4 1957

Dear Charles/ I am still of the mind I was when—now it seems so long ago—I got your telegram re. my "selecting" your poems for the Grove ms. Said mind being: that the event here lies in your own proposition. I am among your most ardent readers i.e. am "sent" forward toward necessity by each made thing poem you show forth. And this *book* idea is, as I see it, potentially a proposition in itself, can be demanding beyond its parts. I need the sending forth that you might present in imagining the book.

This is certainly my own struggle here—first typing up all the mss for poems which as yet have not seen book publication—then seeing that the solid core here is not a "selection" but contains potentialities of a book: that is another in the series of my own proposals. As I see it—in a book the poet can place there poems from their own place—where into a new "arrangement," make a place calld book from which, out of and into which is the before unrealized event. [Critics for instance see the author as some particular world-man in each book: and when an author like Patchen or Rexroth devotes all or a major part of the use of a book to *identity,* tries that is to be Mr. *The* World Man—we get a sameness thru voiding the intensity of the event.] [Patchen finally in becoming a general world-man reaches Hurray For Anything or Everything in which identity-stereotype—vacuity-idiocy (viz Greek root) are united.]

But (and with such economy of language as Mondrian uses) if poet is not using the act of making poem or book in order to make "identity"—a who I am—then they might, primarily, be events in themselves. . . .

Well, and it's this Event of a possible book of yours that is the flower that I keep watching this green plant for. Don't we break into freaks of foliage and lures of root stem stamen and petal, don't the words send up aromas and tremblings and colors, at the very hope that there another blossoming joins on? That it is the Season! It's our natural generosity toward the life that will thrive on our having enterd life even for a moment.

It's not much blossoming thats going on around here to give me any whiff of my own species. And as I'm no self fertilizing bush I grow lonely, looking far forward to *Measure* to supply evidences. Hovering over Whitehead's *Process and Reality,* which yields, where it yields at all, excitations of "greym altar." That the torpid stuff of the brain acknowledge the green tips of the fingers. I need exercise right now of the virtue of dwelling in the palm of the hand. To be a flatness upon table—or here to dwell in the cramp—pinch of fingers on pen writes ("I'm all the way down to and including the pen to feel the paper at the tip").

[And as this feeling extends to the green edge of saying,
: states a mark : as a station]

I don't feel either a "tradition" (as viz. Eliot or E.P. do) nor a personal, ¿personified? intensity, an "individuality" (as viz Lawrence or Joyce) adequate. Reading Joyce's *Letters* I notice him searching, in the form of reading and coercing reviewers, for where was any reaction to his work. Just beyond that feeling, is there any response? is another feeling of a nonindividual significance to the act. The poem, book, thing made after all states more about "making" than it does about any idiotus. The beautiful thing for me is that I can take these certain uses of language, concrete in poems, as my own uses. I can, in a sense, have written *Maximus,* as much as I wrote "The Venice Poem"—The idea perhaps contained in my habitual confusion between writing and reading. Saying I wrote so-and-so for I read so-and-so.

Vanzetti wanted a voluntary community.[29] There is one in this elective correspondence. As, I take it, if you mistakenly address a poem to X, it is not the same thing as writing a poem that reaches X.

In less than a month now, by July 1, I will be released to no sure income, but no inappropriate allegiances [as Poetry Center offerd no sinecure without sin]. I want to begin my book on *Poetics*—The time (my time) is ripe. And the beat quickens at the thot of breaking up into a movement my rudimentary grasp of the "essay"—

Fondest thots thru these months of dogwood and trilium (trillium) and for both of us to get at least one flower to fill the nite air.

Love

Robert

[Stinson Beach]
February 7, 1959

Dear Charles/ Enclosed is Master Copy of the third set of *The Field* (in which the title appears there for the first time, and there have still been adjustments of the text to get the structure of statement I want). It's also the first set that is done after all fifty poems were finishd. The first two (to Denise and Creeley) went off with 48, 49 and 50 still to be added. Each set with 3 carbons, and after five sets I'll have distributed 20 copies : I figure if I have twenty readers that's a good beginning.

To be independent of publishers! I'm going thru the business now with Ferlinghetti : when he askd for a "Selected Poems" he was all agreement

with my proviso that I would set a minimum text in which contents there would be no change [of 72 pages] and indicate a maximum text in case he could afford a larger book. Since the text has been finishd [a month ago] he is enthusiastic but still writes: "isn't there anything you could use since 1950? Think it over." This after my most adamant, short of threatening resistance on behalf of the integrity of the contents. As stands *The Selected Poems (1942-1950)*—but Ferlinghetti don't want to have them dates—is a solid necessary item, it brings into print poems that were not in volumes before, shows by selection in *Medieval Scenes* and by returning to primary manuscript for text my critical estimate here, and includes in its entirety "The Venice Poem." I've to set my jaw and my temper until I see it done. [author's decoration] And J. Williams who stuck me in the first place with $14 freight costs (C.O.D.) on the limited edition of *LETTERS*; and now that I've got the first group of books finishd (which means end paper drawings (2 each volume) and on the special limiteds colord ink paintings and notified him there is he won't send postage to have them sent to him!!! I had canceld the $14 paid out by ordering a copy of the limited edition and taking the rest in credit toward the next *Maximus*. To top it all none of the subscribers to the regular edition have received their copies. I've supplied them all from my own lot.

Adding to this my disgust with Evergreen-Grove gang, and the result is this here plan for typescript distribution.

This is probably my morning coffee temper and I've got to nurse this grievance in order to keep it with me.

Is it not to be found a) a publisher who will keep the integrity of the book. [no trouble there with Jonathan] and b) will match the care the author has taken in his end of the deal in production [care of costs and price] and distribution! Well, Ferling has the b) down pat, and offers a clear contract to keep the book in print, etc, with 8% royalties on the first edition, 9% on the second and 10% upwards [The book at $1]

Jess's show at Gumps elicited only one sale [and now we find we have to wait until the end of the month to be paid], a round of critic's fusillade all the way from one oaf's "dubious mysticism" and "lugubrious color" thru another who reprovd the tendency to illustration [all the paintings were accompanied by texts from Goethe, MacDonald, Mallarmé, Dostovevsky, Hawthorne etc.], and a couple of guarded acclaims as a Romantic painter in the 20th century. It's the visual legend Jess has been striving for; and that the eye can see the Other that the word waits upon. Goya of the black house and Bosch away among the Masters of this art. A return of the iconographic in an all but fanatically iconoclastic period: especially if one takes into

account that much that is representational is iconoclastic; and that the non-representational is not necessary agin' ikon.

We are both bearded. Jess has initiated the move when he was reading a life of George MacDonald and was won in part by the romance-doctrine of the natural man [the lion with sun-mane] rays of my beard, and in part I think by the determination needed in the first half of the 19th century to have a beard against public proprieties. Ebbe Borregaard told me he was persuaded to his beard by the doctrine of natural man out of D.H. Lawrence.

On my part the beard celebrates a *rite de passage* of my fortieth year [Jan. 7, 1959], having come to that celebrated forest "nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita. . .per una selva oscura" that in Dante's day was 35 yrs. surely in ours is 40, we being more prolongd and postponed in our resolution and search for the goods.[30] Having no more than our statement of resolve. And what an eye-opener it be when a poet he do set down to listing 1., 2., 3., 4., 5, them gods, even with an old Chinese model, as E.P. he do. And gets at beats *Food is the root, Feed the people.* Which has memorable rime.

Now that *The Field* is done [and there's 6 years come to one effort; a continuity of structure twixt *LETTERS* and *THE FIELD]*, I am restless to break the hold of this way of working language, the anticipation and recuperation interlocking of elements. And to strive for serial time, an axis of form in the immediate solidity that asks no reference. And do away with that *that* and the *it is* and see what me mind is forced to.

P'haps some of the activity of line has been transferrd from activity of them verbs. Keeping a consistent equation [equilibrium] of activity to structure. But for my taste (appetite) whetted by this work I have done both *LETTERS* and *THE FIELD* seem too rigid, constrained in measure [I wld. seem unable to let go of them reins] and not rough enuf to be beautiful. At least, this reader is feeling the accomplishment of control thruout, of *performance*, has in his recognition that he knows his business in this verse making the further longing for a new inability. There's a lovely quote from Valery who god knows ought to have known clear thru how over-finished one's hand at the game can come to be: "an explosive incapacity that surpasses the *necessary* and *sufficient* capacity."[31] Well, damn his frenchy literary neatness—he's using that phrase to distinguish poetry (and the metaphor specifically) from prose: when that pushing the language to an explosive incapacity is the crux of writing at all. . . . where it gets wired up for sound, heat and light.

Is there any route for some responsible party to take over the financial management of *MEASURE*, and to get Wieners back into operation. He's a first rate editor among the new generation [he don't gang up like Ginsberg and crowd; but goes after a text?] Richard Duerden's got a printing press here and is at work on an issue of new mag *FOOT*, with the Pindar Poem

for ballast.[32] *The Big Table* I'll leave to Ginsberg and gang.[33] Carroll forwarded a request for material to Spicer and me thru McClure : but as I get it the effect of Ginsberg's campaign is as damaging to the cause of a sound concept of what a poem is as is the academe's literature.

Where the conventional and the unconventional are one force [Ginsberg supplying what most English professors believe would happen if you kicked over the traces].

vs. FORM, critical structure. I'd be out of place at that *Big Table* talking about the law I love while the pariah generation shootz the joy-juice into their frantic nerves and stands on their hands for the daily press.[34]

love
Robert

[San Francisco]
February 6/[19]60

Dear Charles,

I've kept yr at Jesus-time by, with the strongest things there NECESSITIES of the Soul and then "my own soul has been bereft" and even "all these years"

with that *in, of* and *for* the Kosmos

rites of aggregation you had in line of insistence when you were here : your "not only but also. . ." which allowd a net to form in place of the old teeter-totter, allowd "not only the teeter-totter but also. . .and also etc."

And am ready now to write as I want to—for I'm in the midst of a poem again, projecting a construct of five sections that allows me to come alive, with the nodes—nodes of illumination for the course of the making.

"I was offering the right stuff"
and [in the enclosed pome]
"flames of beauty on old stuff rage"[35]

Well, for me there's first the elemental life—what your ancients meant by "elements" and settled finally as earth air water and fire. There seems to be only an atomic reality in the table of elements—there's the thing we know more about now, then, the atomic reality /and the old thing, the elemental life. Harvey's *Circulation of the Blood* or Paracelsus's the Doctrine of

Correspondences and the Alchemie have to do with the elemental life and sees man as an elemental being.

And doesn't the adventure into the Kosmos[36]—the atomic reality make man *not the center*—This is anyway my dissatisfaction, some times an outrage at the Jungian concept of *integration* and of a *mandala* view of the universe. It literally circumscribes the spirit from much of what it already *knows*.

Where your Whitehead—that now translates into my Whitehead—where we are *events*; and that "we" may be extended as a sum of a progression of imagined *events*:

atomic — within which is the borderlines of the unobservable the uncertainty principle where time or place are *void*— where there can be no observable flux

elemental — it's here that I return often via the cults of the elements; that we were born out of the Sun; and are so much of water we are shaped by the moon and the planet orders; and to elemental powers and their attendants; fairies, nixies, goblins etc.
[Asclepius advised in dreams walking barefoot on the earth]—

But as we realize that on Mars, Venus or planets even nearer our own in composition—*at the elemental level*—man can not be a *forma maxima* but node among nodes [and among mammals I find it difficult to think of man as a *mammalia maxima*, for he is clearly a contemporary instance or possibility (actual) of what a mammal can be along with elefunts and rats.] And this is still the elemental world for as long as we think of life on Venus or Mars or in the system of Betelgeuse we are still thinking of elements and how life will or might appear in different compositions (alchemical universes)—and beyond that the Kosmic [in *Process and Reality* Whitehead speaks of our particular Kosmos as atomic; and doesn't he open the imagination then beyond Nicholas of Casa's plurality of worlds to a plurality of Kosmos.][37] It's what I meant in "Structure of Rime" by the stars going out to enter a new universe. There is anyway in Whitehead's scheme an unknowable unknown. And when I work in a poem, the order of the poem arises from two relations.

a. a universe—your everything can be known—that a whole poem is a whole poem, as we are at any moment a whole event

b. a kosmos or order or harmony, that includes a void, and *cannot possibly be a wholeness,* but is a mathematical incomplete [our own versions of harmony, our own scales, are always incomplete and what had been dis-cord is being added]

Don't we like the cosmos throw out melodic lines from ourselves (nets) that mean entering a new universe? And whose spirits must be bereft for the Kosmos is, Mrs. Patchitt-Wildebeest says of Faust Foutu: "The peril of souls?"[38]

I find that *soul* seems to me a thing of the visceral
elemental aspect. It's one node, one event: atomically, there's a body or substance as an aggregate of atomic events.
Elementally there's the soul
and Kosmicly what we call spirit=breath/but these are not three persons or three beings but three appearances of a node that might well be a plurality of appearances.

What we are that is a Kosmic event I can't think of as a *soul* for my soul appears to me as a man. My *spirit,* my "I" can appear as a planet or number or a bird.
Not *any* planet or number or bird. In my magic my "I" cannot be anything but that "I", might have an elemental universe with Charles Olson (by sympathy) (has what I call kindred soulship) but spiritually is a node, a Note in an harmonic order or net that is bereft, includes a void, ie, in some parts of which were it a whole "I" would be excluded.

Heraklitus:

XLVII The invisible attunement is better than the visible[39]

LIX Couples are whole and not wholes; what agrees disagrees, the concordant is discordant[40]

And his observation you put here as man is estranged from what is most familiar

It seems to me that the "peril" and yr. admission [that one is living in the presence of a larger life FACT (PRAXIS)[41]

DESIRE] are one with those apprehensions of "love"—in peril

of such simple rites
as the tying of knots,
or threads interwoven
to show design in lives
and what do we imitate
where we must cut,

knots the thread for love—

I know it *is* for something missing that the line of the poem goes out and must refer to

Love,
Robert

postscript

Yrs of February 4 received this morning and I reply at least to say YES and that if I get that minimum of sending copy of first essay at the MAXIMUS—as I hope I might—I'd have to let go at giving some 'literary' account of it, and in turn some poetics of what this thing literature is viz. the MAXIMUS. But the challenge anyway to give some definition to my admiration etc. whets my appetite.

love. etc
R.D.

[PS]
Did you send complete file of BMR to William Roth
100 Spencer St.
Sausalito, California
I will see him in two weeks or so, so I want to go on with the possibility that he might aid BMR and MEASURE.

[San Francisco]
March 9/ 63

Dear Charles,

Some time sequences that I've just begun to see in articulating the story of my "H.D. Book." Pose first that each our "spirit" and "consciousness" is born within (takes its form, using as a material—) the egg or surrounding of the human hive itself. Then phases of history will

have a distinctive "tone" in which we may ourselves be defined or to which we belong.

1—There is a difference in type between Gertrude Stein (b 1872) and the "Imagist" generation (b. 1883 Williams) to 1888 (Eliot the youngest you could be and still be an "Imagist"))—that marks within a decade an historical shift. [i.e. Stein belongs to the naturalistic or realistic psychology of the sentence—still related to Henry James]—no gods, no luminous extase—states—no "vision"—

2. This "Imagist" thing has its childhood between (taking the age 10 as ultimate limit of "child") between 1885-6 (at which point we imagine Williams no longer a "baby" but entering the learnd realm of walking and talking) and 1890 (at which point Eliot learns walking and talking). And its boyhood or girlhood between—no, I see what I've missed here. Let me graph it and the gist will be surer. You'll see what I see. Graph of "conception" (i.e. the world-tone in which the parents of the given poet were "conceiving" the child—I use rather than "fucking" because this fucking also involves unconscious *concept)*

babyhood (i.e. the world-tone in which the poet is nursed, surrounded by the language of his nurses which is here his "food" and not his own instrument)

childhood (first initiation : learning to walk and talk)

boyhood-girlhood (development in delayed sexual consciousness : not the same as sexual unconsciousness—but I am busted here. It is development in delayed sexual permission).

Manhood-womanhood (the individual creative identity. Stein in *The Making of Americans* observd that Americans were often twenty-eight before they knew what they were doing. That which I remember because I was that age when I wrote *Medieval Scenes* which is the first point at which I *knew.* [As I was thirty before I knew how to do what I knew I was doing.] But here is what I saw more simply—given that there was a creative wave "before the War"—in which the Imagists came into their manhood and womanhood: and the impetus of that wave was towards a world-mind or world-poem.

1882 (Joyce conceived born)	germinal
1883 (Williams conceived born)	time area
1885 (Ezra conceived born)	#1
1886 (H.D. conceived born)	1882-1888
1888 (Eliot conceived born)	

[which may be taken as a germinal not only to the "Imagists" but to the *First World War?]*

Time map #2 1902-1914 "the pre-War Era" in the world-consciousness of this period the particular type of poem was germinating of "the poem incorporating history"), a syncretic world-poem where locality and field are crucial. Time & space.

The Cantos	(begun 1912?)	World War
The Waste Land	(perpheral-1921)	1
Ulysses	(begun circa 1914)	
Finnegans Wake	(1920—1938)	post-War and Depression
The War Trilogy	(1942-1944)	World War
Pisan Cantos	(1945)	2
Paterson	(1945-1958)	[now it is clear that a long state of War has set it]
Maximus	(1951?—the first *Origin*)	

But why, how did *Maximus* come into this type series?

Born in 1910, sd. Charles Olson was conceived, born, and nursed; but also initiated into childhood—learned to walk and talk "before the war" the last possible member of a creative family that we now sketch as having its time from 1882-1914 : and its *type* in the poem that organizes time and space to "include history," where the line is conceived of as "free" and the spirit can move freely in time and space.

[Where, when I include time and space I compose symphonically and by theme. I seem to have no vital impulse for "free" movement.]

But *Maximus* is not only like the world-poem it is also the first of a different type. i.e. Maximus as closely related to *The Distances*.

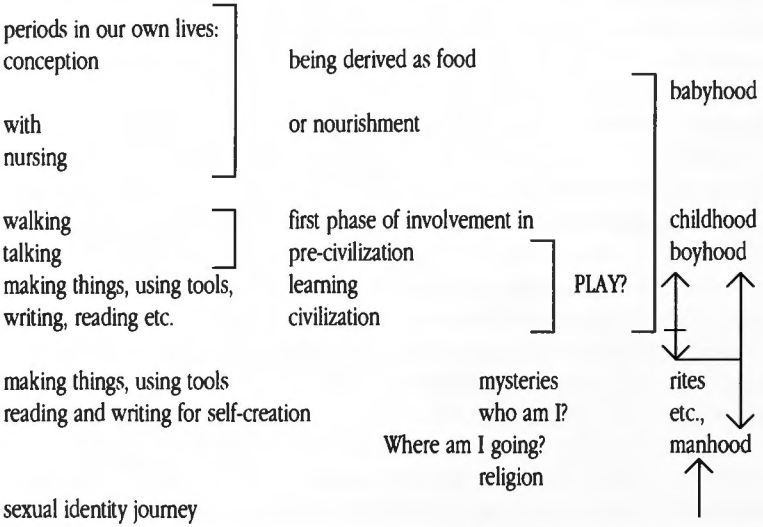
There is another time area I get—the area 1919-1929 post War, pre-Depression.

O.K. You	1910-1914	"pre-war"
	1914-1918	FIRST WORLD WAR
me	1919-1929	the "illusion" of peace
and ↓		
Denise Levertov		prosperity
Creeley	1930-1940	the disillusion of depression and war-preparation

1940-1945	SECOND WORLD WAR
1945—on	the state of war economy with the idea of world destruction

Creeley is the youngest one could have been to have been a "child" in the 1919-1929 period. Born in 1926 he was conceived, born, nursed, and then learned to walk and talk in this period.
You were the oldest one could have been (a boy of 9 to 10) to have also a child in the period 1919-1929.

A picture of how we do have our own tribal initiations and correlating these successive "lives" with phases in the larger commune—how these "lives" have character.



I'm not concernd here with development but with a gauge for reading evidence of what is going on in the human conglomerate and in the individual.

Lorca, for instance, learned to talk when he was four.
The eldest I've heard of 'em being nursed,

Yrs etc.
Robert
mit love.
spring
times

[San Francisco]
June 29 [19]64

Dear Charles, From the library three days ago Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* which has come for reading at a time ripe for it. The 1926 dream in which he is informed that he is "caught in the seventeenth century." "Resignedly I thought, 'Well, that's that! But what is there to do about it? Now we shall be caught for years.' [42] Then the consoling thought came to me : 'Someday, years from now, I shall get out again'." He came to see the dream as referring to his life-long—"condemned" he calls it—necessity to study alchemy.

In Africa an English squatter tells him: (1925) "You know, mister, this here country is not man's country, it's God's country. So if anything should happen, just sit down and don't worry." Which would mean take it easy, yes, but also mean don't worry about it, but attend.

His marriage in 1926 may have, must have, closed in on him, closing him "in the seventeenth century," his "life" having so arrived at an enclosure. Jung seems to believe the *Unconscious* so much a thing in itself that he never reflects upon *correspondences;* so no account of what happens in the dream as it happens in sexual life, or in household life, tho he does see how it happens in *work.* But here he registers "getting out again" in relation to his marriage : "After my wife's death in 1955, I felt an inner obligation to become what I myself am. To put it in the language of the Bollingen house, I suddenly realized that the small central section which crouched so low, so hidden, was myself!" This central section he does not relate to his 1926 dream, but it was added along with the 'paternal' tower in 1927.

The whole chapter "The Tower," or "the language of the Bollingen house" as he calls it wins me completely to him. Here, at last, in the building he is making something—"space for the spaceless kingdom of the world's and the psyche's hinterland" he names it again. A language! A space! Or time for the seventeenth century to get moving in?

With "Passages 8" my own yearning for a house, *the* house (and I got it at the time, the 6th of this month as "a house for my spirit, to house my spirit"—. Something different from home). Where the "Passages 1" propose a nomadic house. [As surely I remember there your "having a home in movement"—these quotes again just my memory of it in those Proprioception essays, as I've appropriated it]. The architect being the Father having that further reality for me that my father was an architect (as my blood-father listed as "day-laborer" in Oakland City Directories of the 1920s may, I can interpret, have been a building-laborer).

Water was primary for Jung, his first thought in thinking of the place. It's light that comes first for me, the day at the window. And then the rain at the window. The night and the star at the window.

As now, the day at the window is the grey glare of summer fog, a corner by the window at the round kitchen table. A clearing in which to work. This writing to you, Charles, came as an inner imperative, an appointment with you for communication's sake. So that today when I was ready for it, the worrying was gone, as if it were the beastly alternative to my attendance. Goaded, driven, herded by what shepherd, but I feel the sheep dog more, only this direction of work going upon freedom. I have to use you as my communicant and have, I realize, to trust that : the contradicting voice, adversary to the work, argues "Why do you think he is interested in that?" "Oh, friend of my free spirit," today I answer easily, "and wherever I go towards what I have to do I go towards him."

I remember your sense of being caught in this period of having to, committing yourself to "profess" is it that the professor, professional does—and Denise writes: "the fact is I *don't* feel my life as a poet is threatened, *even though* I *worry* so about these publishing-type things I've gotten mixed up in. God knows I didn't seek them out, they came at me. I could have said no, it's true : but I have a compulsion to meet the challenges. *For every such thing I've turned down, in the last 2 years, 2 others have sprung up—like dragon's teeth.* . . .At the same time I feel, here & now, creative and alive, not drained by extraneous concerns. The only trouble is, one can't just say 'Well, if at any time it gets to be too much, I will just drop it—because one involves the hopes of so many others more & more as one goes on : like the *Nation*; I can't quit suddenly, ever, but must I if I decide to quit plan months & months ahead so as to see into print all accepted poems first."[43]

And the same week (June 24) Bob writes: "In one sense I seem again to be putting various jobs in front of me, rather than tackle those I clearly have now. . . ."[44] Where I have balked, avoided, worryd, this inner commitment Charles's Friday letter (this "Friday" being a Monday). "Your" tune does not arrive on such a "Friday" schedule; there are times in which writing-to-you starts in my soul, a voice dictating in my thought, and I've let it go, disobeyed. The first command I have circumvented—*was* to write on Fridays. Now I would follow what obedience I can and these two imperatives come to the one proposed.

That opening chapter of the *Analects* returns to mind. Where the two components of a house: 1 the effort, the study

the wings exercised
learning to fly

gathering in one
co-ordination

the study

which I get from Legge (carrying a burden)
the rapid and repeated
effort of the wings of a
bird. . .

and 2. friends : "properly *fellow students*;"
Legge notes "but, generally, individuals of the same class. . . .
like minded."

the
guest coming from distant quarters!
room[45]

From my distant quarters I would come to you anyway, Charles, and in this same communication exercise wings in the flight. As somehow, along with the H.D. book I have committed myself to complete (the building of a house), I am abroad in another poetry—the whole open proposition of these passages. The title "Passages" will certainly be the next book. And these passages now numbered as if in a sequence I may title individually, to lift them as free as I can from the idea of consequence, the consecutive, that numbering gives.

The task Denise has taken is that she is *the* [not *a*] editor of a new venture to publish poetry at Norton (whose only previous poet, I think, is Rilke). Four books a year, and the possibility of (responsibility of) getting young poets into regular publishing.

Creeley's big one now is the proposed *Reader* of your work at New Directions.

I've already got a first letter to him in response to his query—urging "La Préface" from *Y&X* (for the definition there of open parentheses), "The K" (for the coordination there of life-time, inheritance, and the full circle/tide); and the beginnings of mapping out my own trek thru your works, as preparatory to that "Préface" I was some six months at it reading.

Love
Robert

[San Francisco]
Dec. 18/[19]69

Dear Charles, It was a great disappointment to miss seeing you which was a happy expectation for me as far as the Austin congregation went.[46] Well, Zuk was in fine, even amazing form, and Bob did beautifully. The conference was one of the very best. And meeting Octavio Paz was for me the beginning I hope of a friendship.

This has been a lean year for me as far as poems go. Not that I don't feel the things stir in me, urging and urging. But I've also got a store of refusal. And I think I see what it (the refusal) wants. Towards which, a transition of some kind, but also what thinking of the lives of poets I have seen as a doldrums of the fifties, I have begun keeping dreams, fragments if that be all, and going into my private counsels. I have the idea that I might bring myself to the discipline of the dream as actual [where Norman O Brown, who in yesterday morning's dream was howling and trying to get me to admit that conscience was the matter of a knife and a sheep and what every man says and does with that and knowing that and howling with it, is Normal O Brown]. So much so that seeing the late afternoon papers yesterday about a girl's coat MISSING GIRL'S COAT found in Santa Cruz, I thot that's what he was telling me about! _____

The actual and literal dream, and whatever analyses—the dream's analyses.

This not with the sense that the pump will be primed, or the primal pumpt—but with the sense that biologically I might tune in on the function of this entering into the body of old age. I am convinced it is a counterpart of adolescent years, the embodying of something: what we call *age*. Surely how much now science wants to *prevent* aging, after blowing up the works the leading humanistic wish, the dread of ages shld. give a warning of how important a stage of being it is we are persuaded to avoid.

I had begun several months ago to work on translations (it was the only way to read the stuff, Leishman's "translations" dont translate anything—he aims at "style" and throws structure and content away with contempt) of Rilke's *Neue Gedichte*, getting thru the first seven that week or so of going at it[47]. This period is Rilke's push to take the form of the poem to be a hive into which the content is stored (well, at least not as honey alone, but content as wax) I work against my distrust and distastes for the presumptions but in the faith that even in this perversity Rilke is too primal a poet to be only "winning" thru the struggle. Reading old notebooks, preparing them for deposit at U.C., I realized that it had been Rilke's inspiration and direct instruction for the *Duino Elegies* which had implanted the commandment "not to rewrite." The imperative could only have come on that strong with a man who had gone into some depth of forcing conventional (convenient) form to its crisis.

Charles, one of the questions I would have had you been in Austin would have been to pin down the rumors that the new Maximus volume with its blank pages frequently—which *could* be taken as spawnings or tunings—and since the form is always *present* happening, as I get it, in that presence—the lapse is not a defect from *form* or meaning.

But, if you would—(and I know very well indeed how for me it needs the right moment now to get a letter going) could you tell me if there is a defect in the edition: i.e., what blank pages shld occur? I'll write off to the publishers anyway on this, Charles, but right now I *am* writing to you. And it's been months and I've not got a letter off to Barry Hall.[48]. . .

I'fn I didn't write hot off that first week when I got my Maximus from *The Tenth Muse,*[49] and it wont hurt to write from rereadings later, it is a beautiful music for these here ears, and a music that is thruout, a melody of ideas (as vision we hear must be).

A recent rear-view of *Bending the Bow* seeks to wield as a club over me pretentious head the admonitions of your "*Against Wisdom As Such*" with the puzzling assumption that I could use, abuse and present as a ruse the same without heeding them.[50]

Our best wishes for this coming year. Your health and work is still very much of what a new "year" is for us.

Love
Robert

Notes

1 This letter was published in *Origin*, 1st ser., no. 12 (Spring 1954): 210-211 and is reprinted from there.

2 The references are to *In Cold Hell, in Thicket*, published as *Origin*, 1st ser., no. 8 (1953), *The Maximus Poems 1-10* (Stuttgart, West Germany: Jonathan Williams Publisher, 1953), published as Jargon 7, and to Kenneth Patchen (1911-1972), American poet and artist. His volume, *Fables and Other Little Tales* (Karlsruhe, West Germany: Jonathan Williams Publisher, 1953), appeared as Jargon 6.

3 RD quotes the following poems by CO, in the order of appearance: "I, Maximus of Gloucester, to You," "Maximus, to Gloucester," "Letter 6," "Letter 7," "Tyrian Business."

4 *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States with A Life of the Author.* 7 vols., Charles Francis Adams, ed. (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969) 2: 23. The quotation is taken from a diary entry for July 21, 1756: "I will rouse up my mind and fix my attention; I will stand collected within myself, and think upon what I read and what I see: I will strive, with all my soul, to be something more than persons who have had less advantage than myself."

5 Reference to John Hamilton Edwards and William W. Vasse, *Annotated Index to the Cantos of Ezra Pound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957)

6 Breton, André (1896-1966) French poet and artist; Tristan Tzara (1896-1963) French Dadaist writer; René Magritte (1898-1967) Belgian surrealist painter; Benjamin Péret (1899-1959) French surrealist writer.

7 Reference to Mme Curie in William Carlos Williams's *Paterson, Book 4*, "Section II".

8 Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903) and the second edition of her *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927) were the books RD and CO read and used. The first volume of Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press) appeared in 1953, while the remaining two volumes appeared in 1955 and 1957

9 Clifford Hugh Douglas (1879-1952) was the spokesman of the economic theory of "social credit." Ezra Pound reviewed his major work *Economic Democracy* (London: C. Palmer, 1920) in the *Little Review*, 6 no. 2 (April 1920): 39-42. See Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971):301-317.

10 The reference is CO's poem "Letter 3"

11 Gertrude Stein "Capitals, Capitals," *This Quarter* no. 1 (Summer 1925):16. Reprinted in *New Music* no. 3 (April 1947): 3-34 with music by Virgil Thompson.

12 CO, "Against Wisdom As Such," *Black Mountain Review*, 1 no. 1 (Spring 1954): 35-39. Quoted later in this letter.

13 RD, "Pages from a Notebook," *Artist's View*, no. 5 (July 1953): 2-4.

14 Martin Seymour-Smith, "Where is Mr Roethke," *Black Mountain Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1954):40-47. This piece is a review of Roethke's new book, *The Waking.*

15 The references are to work which appeared in *Black Mountain Review* 1 no. 1 (Spring 1954). CO, "On First Looking Out of La Cosa's Eyes:" 3-7; CO "Against Wisdom as Such:" 35-39; Robert Hellman, "The Quay:" 8-17; Irving Layton, "Lacquered Westmount Doll:" 19; Paul Blackburn, "The Search" and "The Assistance:" 20-21; René Laubiès, "Eight Reproductions:" 25-32; Larry Eigner "A Fête:" 33; William Bronk, "Round The Year Jazz:" 34; CO [review]" *Captain John Smith, His Life and Legend*, by Bradford Smith; Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1953; 54-57; Cid Corman [review] "*W.B. Yeats and Sturge Moore, Their Correspondence 1901-1937*," edited by Ursula Bridge; Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, London 1953; 48-51. A[Robert]. M[Creeley]. reviewed *Contact* (An International Magazine of Poetry), *Cerberus* by Louis Dudek, Irving Layton, Raymond Souster, *Twenty-four Poems* by Louis Dudek, *The Black Huntsman* and *Love the Conqueror Worm* by Irving Layton, and *Canadian Poems* 1850–1952: 51–54. M[Martin]. S[Seymour Smith]. reviewed Dylan Thomas, *Collected Poems 1934–53:* 57–58. L[Larry]. E[Eigner]. reviewed John Steinbeck, *East of Eden:* 59–63.

16 Josephine Miles (1911-1990) California poet who for many years taught at the University of California at Berkeley. She was a cripple.

17 Wallace Stevens died 2 August 1955.

18 Keres, malignant spirits, bringers of all sorts of evil.

19 Museu d'Art de Catalunya.

20 Ibiza. One of the Balaeric islands, located in the western Mediterranean, 50 miles southwest of Mallorca. In ancient times the islands was inhabited by the Phoenicians and Carthaginians.

21 San Roman de la Bons: The fresco described here is from the Apse of St. Clement De Tahull, dated circa 1123. *Ergo sum lux mundi* appears in the pages of the book in Christ's left hand, while the symbols A & W appear on either side of his head.

22 A corner of the page containing the missing word has been torn off. The first two letters of the word are "pi," suggesting that the word might be "pictures."

23 Lluis Dalmu (1428-1459) Spanish painter whose *The Enthroned Virgin and Child with Counselors* hangs in the Museu d'Art de Catalunya.

24 Stravinsky's *Symphony of Wind Instruments* (1920). The final chorale is the first time Stravinsky's famous coda appears. Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), the Spanish composer, wrote the work for guitar *Homenaje Le tombeau de Claude Debussy* in 1920.

25 *Anecdotes of the Late War.* Published as Jargon Broadside 1. Highlands, N.C.: Jonathan Williams Publisher, 1955.

26 E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and The Irrational* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951.

27 The reference is to "Letter 6" of *The Maximus Poems.*

28 *The Pound Newsletter,* no. 7 (July 1955) had a note attached to it which announced that the October issue would contain pieces in celebration of Pound's 70th birthday. "Readers of the *Newsletter* who wish to add their voices to this collective celebration are cordially invited to send contributions, the forms of which may be of their own choosing."

29 RD owned and read *The Letters of Sacco & Vanzetti,* eds Marion Denman Frankfurter and Garden Jackson (New York: Vanguard Press, 1930).

30 The reference here is to the first line of Dante's Inferno. RD later published a poem with the title "Nel Mezzo Del Cammin Di Nostra Vita," which was collected in *Roots and Branches* (1964).

31 Paul Valery, "A Poet's Notebook," in *The Art of Poetry,* trans. Denise Folliot vol. 7 of *The Collected Works of Paul Valery.* (New York: The Bollingen Foundation/Pantheon Books, 1958): 177. The full passage reads as follows: "Metaphor, for example, marks in its naive principle a grouping, a hesitation between several different expressions of on one thought, an explosive incapacity that surpasses the *necessary* and *sufficient* capacity. Once one has gone over and made the thought rigorously precise, restricted it to a single object, then the metaphor will be effaced, and prose will appear."

32 Richard Duerden, San Francisco poet. Issues No. 1 and No. 2 of his magazine *Foot* appeared in 1961 and 1962; issues No. 3 thru No. 7 appeared between 1977 and 1979. RD's drawing of a foot appeared on the cover of the first issue, and then again on the cover of the third issue.

33 Five issues of the little magazine *Big Table* appeared in 1959 and 1960. The first issue, edited by Irving Rosenthal, featured Jack Kerouac's "Old Angel Midnight" and a section from William Burroughs "Naked Lunch," while the remaining issues were edited by Paul Carroll. RD resisted the association with Beat writers, which were featured in the first two issues, but his poems did appear in issues No. 3, No. 4, and No. 5 when the editorial policy permitted the inclusion a variety of poems.

34 RD is referring to his own poem "The Law I Love is Major Mover," first published in *Ark II/Moby I* (1956/1957): 12.

35 The reference is to RD's poem "Apprehensions."

36 In CO's hand in right margin: "portentous, primordial, universal, transcendent."

37 Nicholas of Casa (1401-1464). Cardinal, mathematician, scholar, experimental scientist, philosopher, who stressed the incomplete nature of man's knowledge of God and the universe. His principal work is *De Docto Ignorantia.*

38 In CO's hand at right margin: "confusion of novel with void a discord. seems backward overleap 'outward' star-worlds and is space-hung doesn't give time as function its "novelty' no eternity! all infinity-pseudo flow. Miscegenation! & notes—also space!—object."

39 In CO's hand at right: "Verdad Life which shows itself" Whitman."

40 RD is citing from G.S. Kirk, Heraclitus, *The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954).

41 CO's hand at right: "beautiful."

42 C. G. Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* ed. Aniela Jaffé, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963).

43 The letter of Denise Levertov to RD is dated 20 June 1964.

44 The letter of Robert Creeley to RD is dated 24 June 1964.

45 *The Four Books: Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, and The Works of Mencius,* trans. James Legge (Shanghai, China: The Chinese Book Company, 1933).

46 International Poetry Festival held at the University of Texas, Austin, November 17-22, 1969. Robert Creeley replaced CO.

47 Rainer Maria Rilke. Neue Gedichte, *New Poems*, trans. and intro. J. B. Lieshman / London: Hogarth Press, 1964).
48 Barry Hall. British poet, co-founder with Thomas Raworth of the Goliard Press (1965—67).
49 Tenth Muse. a bookstore in San Francisco owned by Julia Newman.
50 Harriet Zinnes, "Duncan's One Poem," *Prairie Schooner*, no. 3 (Fall 1969): 317-320.

"THE RECOVERY OF THE PUBLIC WORLD"

A Conference in Honour of the Poetry and Poetics of Robin Blaser

Vancouver, June 1-4, 1995

Poets have repeatedly in this century turned philosophers, so to speak, in order to argue the value of poetry and its practice within the disturbed meanings of our time. These arguments are fascinating because they have everything to do with the poets' sense of reality in which imagery is entangled with thought. Often, they reflect Pound's sense of 'make it new' or the modernist notion that this century and its art are simultaneously the end of something and the beginning of something else, a new consciousness, and so forth. It is not one argument or another for or against tradition, nor is it the complex renewal of the imaginary which our arts witness, for, as I take it, the enlightened mind does not undervalue the imaginary, which is the most striking matter of these poetics; what is laid out before us finally is the fundamental struggle for the nature of the real. And this, in my view, is a spiritual struggle, both philosophical and poetic. Old spiritual forms, along with positivisms and materialisms, which 'held' the real together have come loose. This is a cliché of our recognitions and condition. But we need only look at the energy of the struggle in philosophy and poetry to make it alive and central to our private and public lives.

Robin Blaser, from
"The Violets: Charles Olson and Alfred North Whitehead"

This conference will honour the occasion of Robin Blaser's seventieth birthday and the recent publication of his major work in poetry to date, *The Holy Forest.* It will address many of the concerns voiced by Robin's work in poetry and prose over nearly fifty years' writing, teaching, speaking and living an evolving poetic thought. There will be six panel sessions, each exploring a realm of this thought; there will be two evenings of readings by poets participating in the conference; and there will be a convivial session, a feast of companions, which will give us an opportunity to speak about the implicate possibilities of an attentive companionship in poetry and life.

The panels: **POETICS, THEORY AND PRACTICE : PAINTING, MUSIC, SCULPTURE, POETRY : HETEROLOGIES : ETHICS AND AESTHETICS : EROS AND POIESIS : TRANSLATION : COMPANIONS (A FEAST).**

To date, some of those who have accepted to participate in "The Recovery of the Public World" include Charles Bernstein, Bruce Boone, George Bowering, Norma Cole, Michael Davidson, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Clayton Eshleman, Brian Fawcett, Susan Howe, Kevin Killian, Michael McClure, Nathaniel Mackey, Daphne Marlatt, Michael Ondaatje, Michael Palmer, Peter Quartermain, Jed Rasula, and Sharon Thesen.

For further information about the conference, including registration information, please write to **"THE RECOVERY OF THE PUBLIC WORLD,"** c/o The Institute for the Humanities, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. Canada V5A 1S6; or fax (604) 291-5788.

LINDSAY HILL

FOUR POEMS

BIRTH

Out it
Automatic
Into the virtual blood-box
Out it through the funnel
Of groin and moan
The primitive pushing out
Another and another
Into the silicon paw
The stress pulse and serum
Video game roulette and novocain
Stress-fix and matrix
Out put it
Into the replica
The strapped on goggle-scape
Strain it out
Muscle it out
Into the geo-digits
The engines
Into the disconnect

MENDELEVIUM

On the periodic table
I'm down in the lower right
One of the new
Unstable ones
I don't have
The abundant certainty of oxygen
Nor the constancy of zinc
I'm closer than the others
To the unraveling edge
Remote from where the early elements
Glow like houses on straight streets
I know the world pivots
Where matter won't stabilize
Humming atomic numbers of no return
I loiter darkly
Asking to choose and asking
How everything touching my face
Becomes a fuse

TERROR PANTOUM

Around her death has been random all her life
Everyone a conscripted straw of history
So in her heart there are no innocents
Certainly the unconcerned are not innocent

Everyone a conscripted straw of history
Inanimate even before the bomb goes off
Certainly the unconcerned are not innocent
And she deplanes in Athens leaving the package behind
Inanimate even before the bomb goes off
Which is to say the subjects have done their final things
And she deplanes in Athens leaving the package behind
With terror the pivotal goes cloaked in the ordinary
Which is to say the subjects have done their final things
When the bomb goes off she is buying a tortoise-shell comb
With terror the pivotal goes cloaked in the ordinary
Her motives seem flat and secured as a folded knife
When the bomb goes off she is buying a tortoise-shell comb
So in her heart there are no innocents
Her motives seem flat and secured as a folded knife
Around her death has been random all her life

INFERNO

One sighs a stream of flame with a word at its end
Another goes altogether in a blast
A word that is oddly cold and without weight follows up
It is not beyond the stress-inoculation of the nerves
To know that these who are on fire have hearts
Consumed in our holdings
As hands themselves are burned
On the ropes of climbing and decline
It is not beyond what we could come to learn

In the bilge-gut and whore-wash of gathering
That these who are on fire
Have hearts
In the brute roulette of grabs
Straightforwardly they are fuels
In the mirror of inferno
One sees a figure on fire and turns away
Convinced it is someone else

SONGS IN FLIGHT

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
INGEBORG BACHMANN

Bilingual edition (German & English)
Translated and introduced by **Peter Filkins**
Foreword by **Charles Simic**

Poet, short story writer, novelist, essayist, Ingeborg Bachmann is regarded as one of the half-dozen most important German-language writers of the second half of the twentieth century. And in the acclaim for her passionate and varied body of work, a supreme place is usually granted to her poetry. English-language readers still don't have enough Bachmann to read, but this volume of eloquent translations (and an excellent essay and notes by the translator) is the best of all possible beginnings. — *Susan Sontag*

Bachmann's poems have an awareness of the tragic worthy of the Greeks. She is the poet of the long, dark night of history and the lone human being awake in it. — *Charles Simic*

Hardcover $ 40.00
ISBN 1-56886-009-9
Paperback $ 19.95
ISBN 1-56886-010-2

Distributed in the US and Canada by
Consortium Books Sales & Distribution
1045 Westgate Drive
Saint Paul, MN 55114
(800) 283-3572

Marsilio Publishers 853 Broadway, NY, NY 10003 (212) 473-5300

ANDREW JORON

PECULIAR ROOTS HAVE REASON'S EYES

As mineral is changeful
Within the fixity of its lament

Rays raise Earth
To a semblance of waves, to
        words out of order

        the data invoked
By a dying choir—*There is rage*
        in the body's sequences

Neither sense, nor object
But an unfinished ratio

Heard as a curve
        continuous with endings
As a vowel is laden

With air's ores, the sky subterranean
To that skin

        let weather accelerate
Below the horizon, circumference of
        a bell. Sound, divided

From sound, ancient
In its approaches—the rung silences

To be spoken. Any name, to fructify
As the famine of its presence

        —lightning's most intricate delay

GUSTAF SOBIN

TWO ODES

SIXTH ODE: THE GROTTOES

is always towards the furthest, and,
  finally, towards the
lost themselves that the senses transit, slip
furtive. that bunched in
muscle, we'd

lusted, it seems, after so
very

little. channels, conduits, the
  secret history—perhaps—of history it-
self, written
in

dark drafts, elusive
scribbles. as if, inadmissible, mass in its
very
densities, were
riddled. and you, nothing more

than this breath
that wedged. tongue that
in-

sinuated.

*

oh eyes so pale, you'd
written, they'd
promised grottoes. oh holy, the
grottoes, the hollows, the weird birds of
our own,
dis-

articulated heart. (what, in
de-

fault, had
been plundered,
re-
lentless).

*

'an earth, but else-
where,' isn't this
what you meant? what you'd say? what the
eyes rising—yes, so pale,
  so
impervious—already disclosed? for *here*'s
only here in the vocable's
forced

re-
tention. past, past
ourselves, in our own, sonorous dis-

persions, resonates the
gloriole, the
ring

of things released. the rocks, just
now, as if a-
float
in the puddle of their own shadows, and the
papery, pink blossoms of the
cistus, rife

with light, with the very
light, it would

seem, of some ultimate
ac-
quittance.

*

massed, now,
a-
long the edges, awaited—you'd written—no,
not the barge, the puffed
barge, but the

particle. but the
predicate, be-

fitting.

yes, holy the grottoes, the
hollows, those excavated worlds which
lie, luminous with

sound, there—just
there—past the inviolable lines of
our own
fore-

closures.

SEVENTH ODE: THE RELICS

. . .as if chained
to those clouds—what billowed
against the blind walls of your forehead—sought
losses, didn't you? those elaborate
  excavations in which, unearthing less,
ever lesser, only kept
what you hadn't
found.

relics, what the
breath, once,
had buried. had enveloped
in so much verbiage, the still-
  drifting digits—nimbi—of the un-
dissociable. would traffic, wouldn't

you, in
those omissions. in that much
empty

imprint. you, living
as you did, towards the very end, at the
earth's

virtual completion, rummaged, didn't
you, a-
mongst those spent
sonorities. there, just there, within
systems so dense, so perfected (their only attributes,
themselves) picked, didn't

you, at that
syntactic
trash.

*

oh hollow, you

write, the heart's a
hollow, a hole in which, a window in

which, a cloud in
which, in

which nothing, really, but, occasionally, some occasional hiatus, really, a 'where' whereby a small smattering of rays, perhaps, might alight, occasionally, like in some kind of pantoscopic vision, might even, through the medium of some artifice, like a kind of spray, say, pelt the heart, putting it to rest, momentarily, with something unlikely as a smile so dolorous, so beatific, you'd swear that what you'd just witnessed was not only real, but real in such a way that nothing, in fact, could ever again presume to such consummate reality, notwithstanding the fact

that, occasionally. . . .

and so on, etc.,
etc. for in the name of
nothing, had

reached
this abundance. in the name of name, finally,
this nominal
diktat.

*

'scoop,' you'd whisper, and
feel your lips
curl to the
injunction. for under, just under, as if

buried in
sacks, soft as
organs (the sacks themselves
jingling dully with their own, un-

recycled waste) would lay the first,
banished strata.
would

lay, that is, that iridescence, the puffed
vapor of some long-
since
discarded compound. 'scoop,' you'd murmur, would
hear your-

self murmur, as time after
time, would plunge

through that
wasted idiom. would
poke—wouldn't you—through so much scroll, the
un-
rolled print-outs of some post-

historic in-
fallible. oh less, so much less, even
less than the refuse you'd
worked through, would
lay, at

last, that broken
vo-

cable. oh worthless as
wind, as light itself, would it slip, ineffable,
from your fingers? would it? from the
claw your
fingers formed as

they'd pick, jab, grapple at its
very

edges? oh blown weather,
dis-

banded heart, whatever utters,
utters nothing, really. and makes of that
nothing—lyric—its
only
measure.

JEAN-PAUL AUXEMERY

XENIAS

(Tr. from the French by Charlotte Mandell)

ARGUMENT

. . .So probably every mental pursuit takes its reality and worth from the ardor of the pursuer.
—Keats—

Beings haunt me—presences that give reality its weight of being. My voice, suddenly, becomes theirs: it welcomes them, greets them on the threshold; it runs away from me, treats them as close friends; it listens to their demands.

To please them, it becomes a stranger; I am present at this metamorphosis. I am present at my disappearance. These words efface me, my death speaks, my voice is no longer of this place. It no longer recognizes me. I make my descent through the circles.

I do not recognize myself. Very quickly, the words of the Other began to use a rhetoric of formulas, to which I could only submit myself—submitting myself to a long task of *correction,* which everything in me refuses. The voice wanted me to assent to the dictation—hence all this phrasing, these layers of forced meaning.

Addresses, dedications have tried to stave off this loss of self, this saturation of otherness. Signs, from the bottom of the abyss.

—Xenia is a gift of hospitality. The names of hosts protect me. Magic: under this protection, I want to repossess my speech, maybe for lack of seeing myself as I am.

To leave these circles, alliterations, rhythms. To leave all this obsolescence.

To come back to the irony of a less obviously tragic reality.

May the Other give way.

In the meantime—here is what the thief of speech made me say.

SALT OF REALITY

to Richard Sieburth

Sometimes we walk on chasms;
the volcano's mouth gapes at the empty sky.
Years swallowed up, endless swirlings,
glances of lost lovers—fates that draw
towards their fulfillment, as towards agony.

Our horror precedes us and burns us like salt.

Shades now and then skim the clifftops.
Eyes close, and these substanceless bodies
soon fill with weightless gestures the calm
desolation of these places without mooring:
we sail, we reel.
—Walkers of eternity,

we are our own shadows in the mirror of skies.

On the edge of our eyelids the blade of light glides.
That is how we travel through the world—at the brink of chasms.

Everyone has the key to this dramaturgy.
Images in the mirror are annealed by the salt of our looks.

Carried away by absurd rhetoric, let us love our shipwreck—
gash without cure, perfect seduction.
Let bodies
go on dancing their dance of air
in the depths of the memory
of abysses
and of skies.

THE STEM

to Gerrit Lansing, to the City

Vessel's prow:
the goddess' chest plunges rises—from the cabin
the pilot's eyes follow its course on the horizon line.
The goddess: the compass, the sighting, the figure of desire.

The breasts of the painted-wood siren plow the Ocean.
The monster comes on the side of this quick, gliding body;
he dreams with liquid, lyrical hands, he gets excited,
stroking the elusive crupper enskirted with foam.
—Vain rhetoric: the Beast ruminates sings his desire.
Black back of the Inert.

The ship glides flees on the lips of foam
the goddess exults the stem plunges into the wave
—a dark lamp on the logbooks,

lines and curves—marks and points—plottings
of Desire.
So who wouldn't want
the Perfect Child?

At Stage Head—eye of the painter, hand of Maximus:

to learn from them the *how* of transubstantiations.

Let us measure the rocks and shores of Gloucester.

Kindness of springs and coves for our human thirsts

QUOTING CHARLIE PARKER

to Michael Gizzi, to the land of birds

A man's ideas and feelings change as time goes by,
and the moment when past and future join
is hard to pin down—
that music has already been written,
and we
perhaps only really play it
after we've used up all the paths leading
from one end of the staff to the other
where we try to come to ourselves again.

Few people know that
what they hear comes out of an instrument,
and that it is still a man's voice:

they only hear the theme endlessly repeated
on the line of memory, though it might be
just a prophecy.
                For instance:
    it will be nice tomorrow;
                women will leap over streams;
the sun will wink in the puddles;
                the mountain will be visible
from the valley, and the air in the valley will be very cool,
    yet the wind will be gentle.

You can never tell what you'll be thinking tomorrow.
Perhaps one should still wish to realize
that this musical air will never stop,
and that it will forge ahead, alone,
                and that I'll learn to know it.

THEATRUM

to Robert Kelly, to the high country

The dancers in the space have gestures of sand:
the sight of their shifting on the area of action
results from this willed slowness of gestural meditation
so that whoever watches them watches himself seeing
a dissected sketch of human determinations.

There is also a vertical dimension to action:
the space is not only the surface of slowness
where colorless gestures organize bit by bit;

coming from the flies, a trickle of water, a brush of sand
give rhythm endlessly to meetings and flights.

Sometimes in distance bodies seem to meet again,
and in extreme closeness they seem to drift apart.
Immobile objects sharpen the sight of whoever sees
by fixing lines of force to the actors' motion.

A reflecting pool mirrors the bodies' richness and nakedness;
an infinite birth takes place on the bed of light.

Then our beloved death flies away with the whirlwind:
nothing moves, everything changes—what is beauty?

What do we really know of it, what do we know?

In the slow storm, puffs of wind twist fabrics of wings.

ALCHEMY

Quod natura relinquit imperfectum, ars perficit.

1—

to Clayton Eshleman, to Sulfur

First we saw the herds of antelopes
grazing from one end of the meadow to the other,
subjects to the movement of an imperceptible course.

The grazing beasts were continuing their migration;
clay cliffs, sand rises, and rapids
haunted the muscles of their breasts.

We could just hear the trembling air scream
with the eagles' distress at the zenith of the herds.

Then our eye, born to the light, created
the invisible sense of all this peace
of the meadows of all the beginnings.

We ourselves turned into light,
having given the beasts their fulfillment:
we watched them live and die, like us,
in that instant when light created us
—fully conforming to our only rule: to dazzle.

Antelopes don't think anything, their bodies dictate them,
says the voice of the Ephesian.
There is only this new gaze resting on the world,
which creates what could not exist without it.

So we allowed this young sun to cross the day,
and from it we won the feel of utter fullness.

ALCHEMY

2—

to Michel Deguy, to "l'homme héliotrope"

Then the wings opened onto the lake and the night,
from thickets other beasts emerged, with eyes of water;
the birds sang of fear in a long rustle of air.

And we climbed the cliff, in the dark;
we threw ourselves on laterite ruts,
and the shadow lake vanished into the water eyes.

Flights—shaft of a gleaming hoof, of a muzzle wet
with evening dew—eyes of swift fawns.
The tuft of dry grasses breathed under the hoof's stroke.

—Later (to be born, to be born in the wound of earth),
we slept near solfataras, in the cradle of grasses,
on the edge of the rift, after we surprised the duikers.
And our eye danced like a restless flame in the night.

At daybreak, the vultures were drawing circles
on the sky—open, above the vales.
The basalt scar was gaping purple.
The water eyes—our heart—loved the new sun.

All work brings death, that is the world's only thought,
says the voice of the Ephesian.

Soon we will enter the flourishing towns,
having left the valleys of shadows and shiftings.
Our bodies will shake at the borders of the cities;
then we'll mingle with the busy herd of men.

In the antelope's breast, a plant-like thought;
under the lionness' eye, the migration advancing.
We are finally going to labor in the dazzle,
the voice says.
Man's heart follows the flame, finally.
Night is the brightest wife of this young sun.

RIKKI DUCORNET

from: PHOSPHOR IN DREAMLAND, *Chapter Twenty-Two*

When he looked back upon it, it seemed to Phosphor that his marriage had taken place in a dream. The instant he arrived at his intended's door, Professor Tardanza, perpendicular and shrill, and his silent, rhombohedral wife, swept him up in precipitous plans. For one brief hour he had encountered his beloved, in lace and cuneiform, flanked by her mother and an equally architectonic aunt. The procedures were all so terrifying that the poet, reduced to gumbo, stayed in the shadows of the event—even after it was over. Before he could blink, before he had time to awaken and find his legs with which to run, he was cornered by the priest and propped beside an unknown cipher metamorphosed into a heap of clothes.

The cathedral floor was paved with black and red tiles forming a labyrinth; concentric circles like ruptured intestines formed a visceral pathway. Staring at it, Phosphor felt dizzy and numb. The circular maze might be a wheel, the wheel of a mill. The poet thought: *I shall be ground into dust.* He imagined himself atomized and lifted into the air, to settle on someone's coat only to be brushed off with a careless gesture of the hand. He thought:

Man is but a ~~transient~~ stuff. . .a ~~sidereal~~ powder. . .on the ~~breath~~. . .wind of ~~eternity~~. . . finitude.

To add to the event's strangeness, a hideous baying, as of wolves, could be heard from time to time circling the cathedral. It was Phosphor's abandoned master, Señor Fantasma, mourning his volatilized house. Near dawn, far from town, a scream of rage and pain shattered the air; propulsed by who knows what demons, Fantasma had sliced off his nose.

Throughout the wedding feast, Phosphor was haunted by hallucinations. His bride was a curiously-shaped magnet and he a shaving of iron hopelessly caught at her side. A pig had been roasted entire and Phosphor, having received its face for his portion, as was customary, was seized with an impression of being pushed head-first into a pit. What was worse: when he dared steal a glimpse of his bride's face he did not recognize her. *People,* he mused, *have a way of looking very unlike themselves up close.* He shuddered to think that he would be seeing her closer.

Pulco had said that she was beautiful. But the boy was illiterate and knew not the first thing about beauty. Phosphor hoped she was not all that beautiful: it was one thing to write beautifully, or to write about beauty, even beautifully—but to embrace it, alone in a darkened room, No! No! That was something else altogether. To *satisfy* beauty! That was, surely, beyond his capacities. Another glimpse. . .

It *was* a beautiful face and yet meant nothing to him, despite his dreams, his longing in the woods to kiss it, lingeringly, on the lips. Of course, he did not know her, whatsoever. The poet considered this with a spark of hope. Not because, heaven help him, it was a face devoid of meaning. He looked at it again. Extravaganza ate with appetite. Her own portion—the pig's tale, roasted to a turn—was, between her faultless teeth, reduced in minutes to a bone heap.*

When the feast was over, Professor Tardanza took his son-in-law by the elbow, and together they paced the garden, presumably to give Extravaganza the time she needed to wipe the grease from her lips and to bathe her succulent body in a water scented of gardenias.

In the center of the garden was a pool, and a little marble bench. Here the two men sat, Tardanza yawning but jocular, Phosphor agitated and depressed. He stared into that still water illumined by the moon, and for a brief moment considered drowning himself. It was then that something extraordinary happened:

Within the water, Phosphor saw a pair of eyes that—or so it seemed—expressed all those fugitive ideas with which he had been grappling, not always successfully. The eyes opened out upon infinity, and eternity, too. They seemed wise to him, and sweet. The poet's heart leapt with recognition and delight. This time he *was* in love; he looked deeply into his beloved's eyes and did not falter, he did not see death, nor vortexes, nor abysses; he saw limitlessness.

"That," said Professor Tardanza, pointing to the great copper-colored face just now breaking the surface, "is Extravaganza's pet carp." Reaching into a pocket he threw the fish a crust. "I shall be turning in." Tardanza patted the poet's back. "Extravaganza is waiting for you."

But Phosphor was lost in thought, lost in the contemplation of a creature so graceful, so coolly ethereal he wondered: had it an anatomy? A spine? Had it ribs? It occurred to him that only a creature *without feet* could

---

*More from Ombos:
In the bed of the ogress, appetite, copulation, birth, death and defecation are all contained in (and exemplified by) the vortex—and I use that word precisely because it best describes the vertiginous quality of Nuno Alpha y Omega's (dit Phosphor) vision, as well as Jonathan Swift's. Swift's own vision, of course, was surely informed by his chronic malaise. Ménière's disease is best characterized by precipitous vertigo and severe imbalance. The world, in seizure, appears to spin.

be capable of transcendence. The fish was a vivid thing, languid and lovely—more syllable than animal; a tracery, and, as it flitted in and out the shadows, a thing of light.

He passed the night there, enraptured, perched upon the marble bench, tossing lumps of wedding cake to the fish.

Before you look too long upon Phosphor's voluptuous fever (all the more so because it cannot be consummated) I shall continue the tale. You must know that, at least for now, his bride Extravaganza, gorgeous nitwit that she may be, does not miss him. As her groom sits dreaming and kneading crumbs into pellets, she is thinking about doll's clothes.

She is an innocent creature, her one immodest act—performed for Pulco's benefit—in compliance with her father's wishes. Never has she entertained impure thoughts; she is, or so it seems, incapable of thought. (In Ombos' words: *it is sexual love that liberates the libido and sets the lover to dreaming. And so, becoming . . .*) Often, to reassure her mother as well as himself, Tardanza has said of her:

"As Extravaganza is incapable of learning anything, she will never learn anything *dangerous.*"

"She has the holiness of the dumb creatures," the priest who has married her agrees: "Without one hairline fracture, her soul is as clean as any fish living in water, the very air it breathes well-washed with water, its thoughts, water."

Perhaps, had he perceived her thus, Phosphor might have loved his bride with the same unreasoning enthusiasm he now demonstrates for her pet carp. But wait, for there is more:

As the poet meditated upon the resemblances and dissemblances of all things—how, for example, a lamb's rump could be mistaken for a head of cauliflower—it came to him that the human heart is very like the sea anemone pulsing in salt water, how it was only natural that he should be enamored of a creature making her home in water.

The little scales upon the fish's back were reflecting surfaces, an infinite array of small mirrors, so that if the light was right, the poet could see his own eye gazing back at him, or even his own face miniaturized and multiplied.

Days later, as Phosphor continued to spy upon the fish, a large, white slug fell into the pool and Phosphor was shocked to see his beloved snap it up as eagerly as she did the bits of cake he proffered so lovingly.

This phenomenon happened then: the poet recognized the carp's corruptibility *and his own.* His reflection reminded him that he, too, ate to live. Phosphor had eaten squid for dinner, redolent of coconut milk and ginger. When the fish excreted a surprisingly thick string of filth, the poet,

shocked, was forced to reflect upon corporeality and to accept the nature of the physical world in its entirety.

His beloved, so like polished metal, so languid and significant, more the stunning consonant of some divine alphabet, more scroll than living creature—

so like fire, so silent, so entire, so entirely *other,* so consummately mysterious—was, as was he, bound by natural laws. Why hadn't he realized this sooner? It was absurd, he decided, laughing at his own folly, to expect that his beloved be immaterial. Had she been immaterial, he could not have adored her as he did. As much as her vital corporeality, her mortality moved him. She was precious, he realized, because she was not eternal but an instant of delight to be seized before eternal night would snap her up forever, snap them both up—man and maid, forever.

Yet, just as this new idea came to him, two things happened simultaneously, and this for the poet's felicity:

First he recognized the absurdity of referring to a fish as a maid; next the image of Extravaganza appeared before him. He rubbed his eyes and saw that she was truly there; indeed, her perfume of fruit and flowers filled the air. Reflected in the pool, her face wavered before him: curious, attentive, tender. Turning to her, and for the first time taking her hand in his, Phosphor noted that she, too, was sleek and vibrant and mysterious; she, too, palpitated with eager life. He saw the blood pulse at her neck and was moved, saw the sweetness within her eyes, her slender ribs, her hands like little wings her skin like hot sand. So acute was his vision, that he could see her unique vibrancy. The poet's bride had, in these brief moments, eclipsed her rival, the fish.

I suppose, or I imagine, that it was then that Phosphor realized—O—not with his rational mind, but with his soul, that words are the vehicles of meaning and intention, not *things* to be set buzzing in the void in order to fill it with a digressive, numbing hum—but particles of meaning, interactive and necessary. Now that Phosphor was ready to love, he was also ready to speak *and so to write*—or so, dear Ved, that is how I have come to see it. Because from that night on, Phosphor's poems are no longer so much hot air but the sails that—tugged this way and that by intuition—set the little boats of life on course, swift and bright and sure. Guided by love, informed by desire, the vision incandesces and the poems catch fire:

> *Extravagant,* the afternoon hums in your throat*
> *A palpable orbit in a sky of smoke*
> *Your face as necessary as the orbits of stars*
> *The elusive, the essential trace of the sun.*

---

*Again, Ombos: *I find the pun on the poet's wife's name especially charming.*

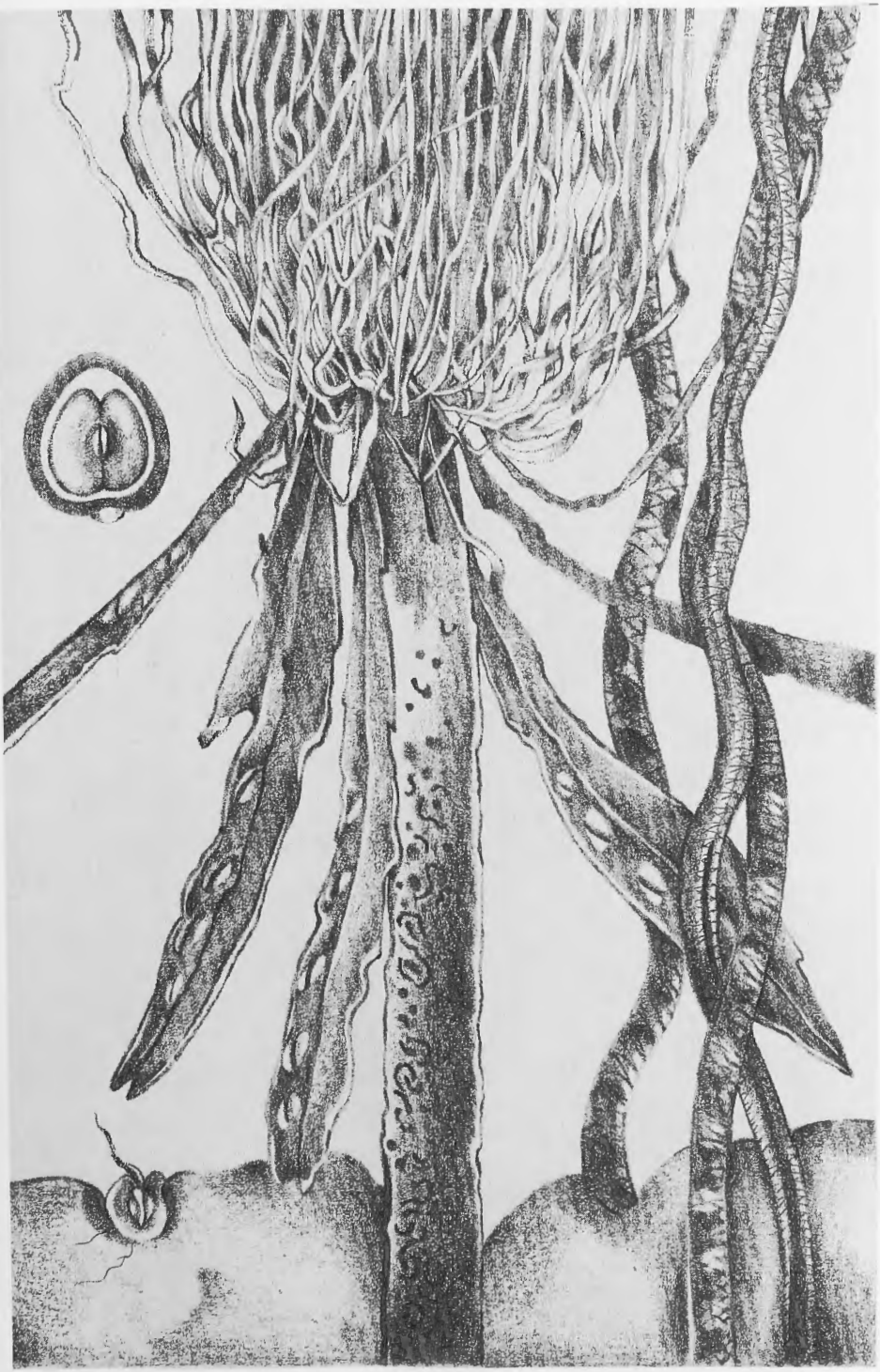
You are the fire that tempers worlds
A rain of smoke, a planet of smoke.
You are the moon riding the scales of a carp in a pool
Of light. The evening. The eye of the owl.

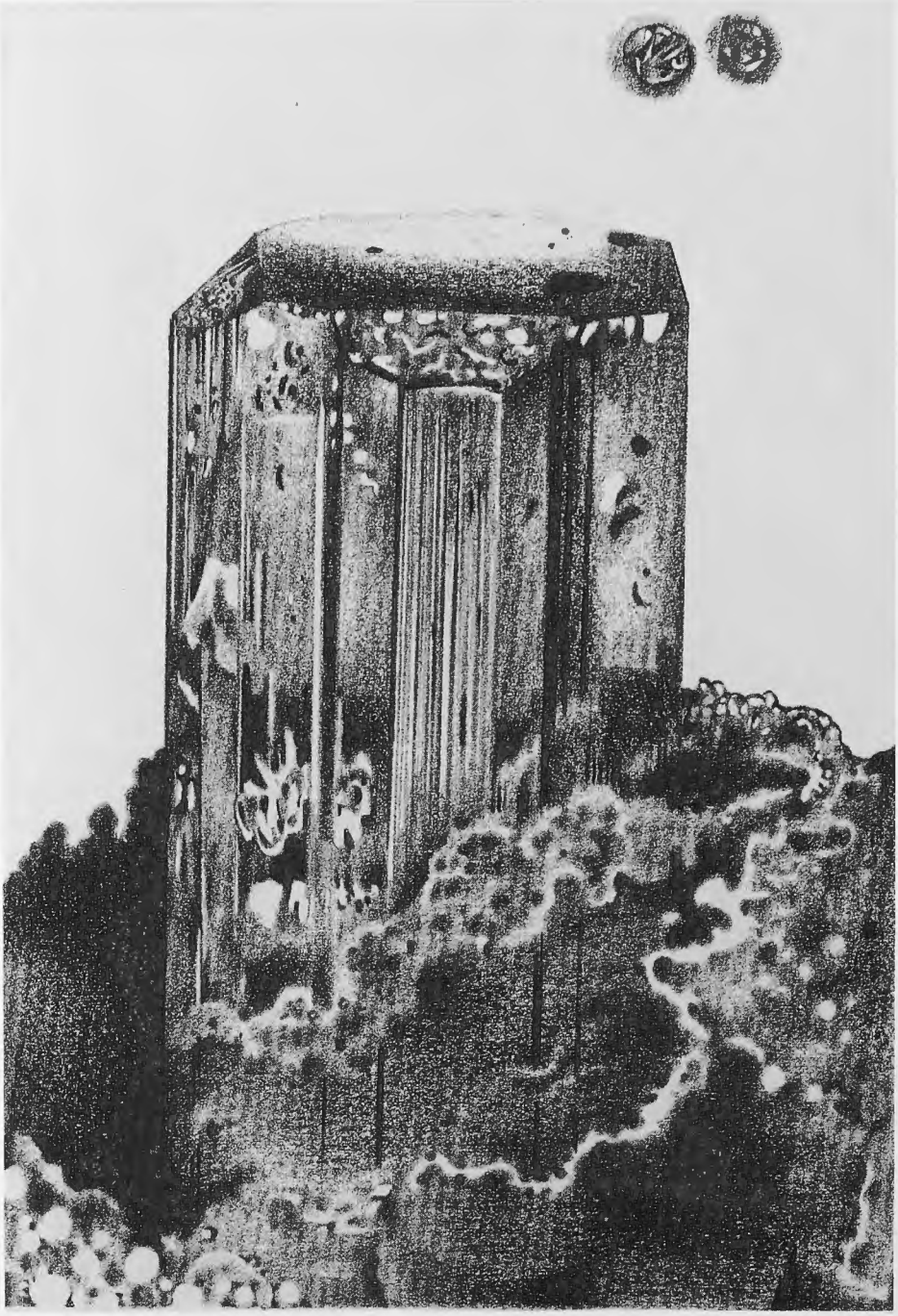
Written in an ink of flowers
Your voice is a hieroglyphic stairway
Suddenly tangible in the wet morning.

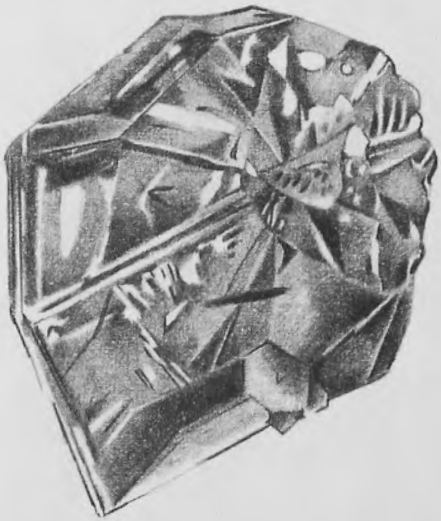
Your voice is rain, a fistful of copal
A serpent uncoiled in the sun.
Your voice is paper, the blood of plants, other
Precious Things.

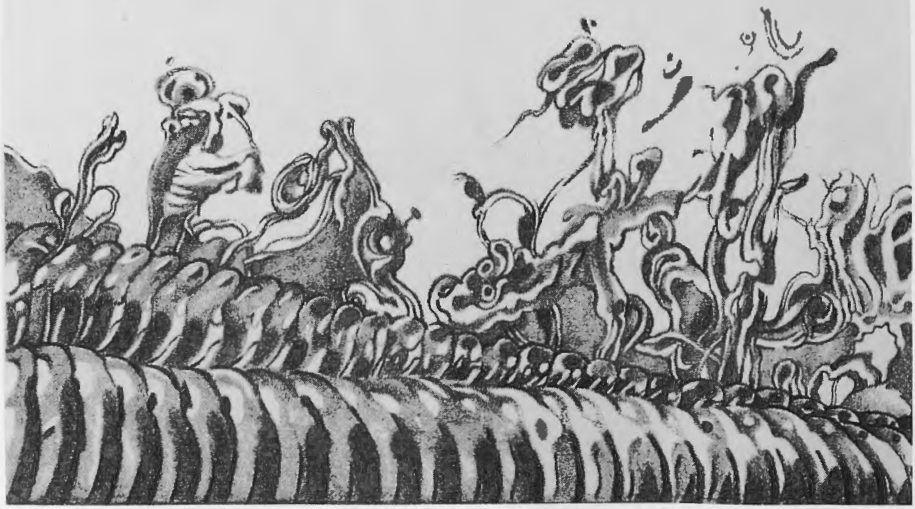
RIKKI DUCORNET

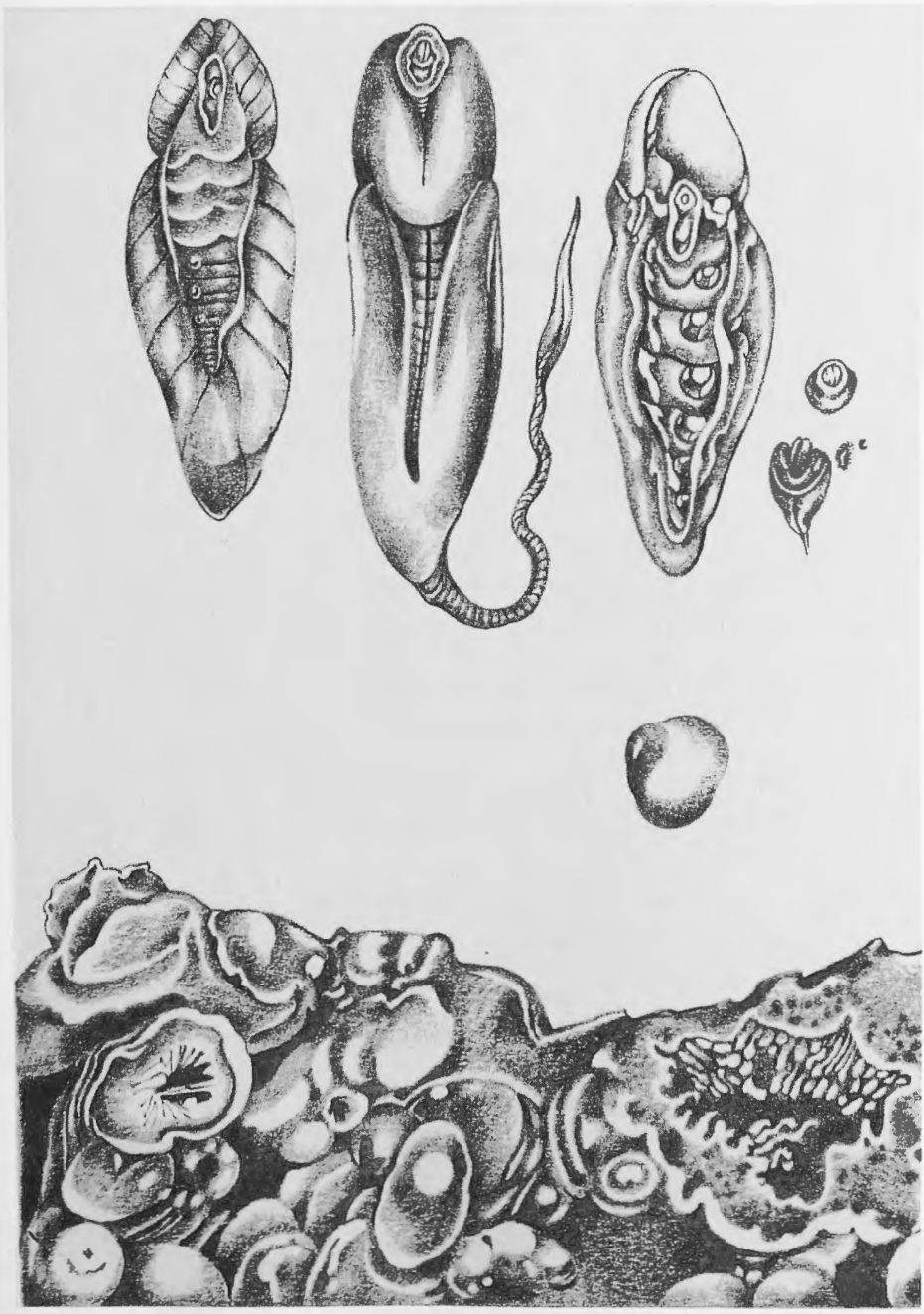
SIX DRAWINGS











JAYNE CORTEZ

THREE POEMS

I WAKE UP EARLY

I wake up early in the morning
sit and think about
divination trays
cow bells
oil drums
the sky all rusty with gongs
I jump up as
day snaps back through
maze of ashy Nubian thighs
poems entering my head
from left side of midnight
I put them on paper
touch down
in lower register of the turmoil
let one shape
tell the whole story
like a Thelonious Monk plunk
the motion
clear
distinct
rooted in what it is
what it was the
instant I hit it
the moment everything said click
unpredictable
imagination sticking out its tongue
unrepeatable

sound boards posing like
the sun that changes
into a bird standing
on crocodile teeth
transmissions
acquisitions
use it
go beyond it
just write and let it happen
    hangnail in afterbirth
    saltfish motif on steel

CULTURAL OPERATIONS 1992

The fishmongers are trying to sell fish
Ironmongers trying to sell iron
Poets are having beautiful springtime daughters
A sculptor is walking around astonished that he's 55
A painter overdoses on fumes from a pizza parlor
Eight year old boys are on stage
holding their crotches and rapping about
"i'm making love to my baby"
while armed Renamo bandits
who murder playmates
rape little girls
turn kids into killers
and force families to cook and eat remains
of dead relatives
are calling themselves
heroic freedom fighters
& the white South African government wants
to give up the word Apartheid
without giving up the gold,
the army & the real estate
& the new judge is showing his hairy teeth
to the Supreme Court
as the European Economic Community gang up to
keep racism in its body of segregated cash machines
and it's operation same old bullshit
operation same old right-wing multinational
think-tank manipulation of history,
geography and information
operation out-of-shape generals
still talking war & licking
plates in the cafeteria
operation desert dumbness
operation army for hire
operation pop star
still looking like
a walking flop house

operation thieves
still giving music awards
and patting each other on the back
for stealing and imitating their asses off
operation what does it matter
as long as the mob gets theirs
& the queen gets hers
& the X slaves continue to pay tribute
& the colonies continue to pay rent
& the International Monetary Fund &
World Bank stay intact
& there are no mass unruly defaultations
& no reorganizational plans of advancement on
front burner of an urban rebellion
& as long as we act as silly and mediocre
and corrupt and greedy and repressed
as we're programmed to act
and don't explode
& globalize that explosion into
a redistribution of all there is to redistribute
then everything remains what it is
& children you'd better hold onto your balls
because it's operation deforestation
operation deprivation operation privatization
operation falsification operation contamination
operation marginalization operation militarization
operation polarization operation subordination
operation toxification operation destabilization
operation termination operation

STATES OF MOTION

Sun Ra left the planet in a pyramid made of metal keys
Willie Mae Thornton sailed away in an extra large
moisture-proof harmonica
Pauline Johnson flew off in a brass trimmed telephone
Thelonious Monk withdrew in a space ship shaped like a piano
Art Blakey departed in a great wood & stainless steel bass drum
Esther Philips bowed out in a nasal sounding chrome microphone
Charles Tyler, George Adams & Clifford Jordan reached another realm
in receptacles constructed like tenor saxophones
Okot p'Bitek shoved off in an attache case full of songs, books &
[whiskey
Leon Damas hit the road in a big black banjo
Audre Lorde departed wrapped in her book jackets
Dizzy Gillespie zoomed off in a sweet chariot shaped like a trumpet
Miles Davis left in a magnificent copper mute
Marietta Damas vacated the terrain in a beautiful house filled with
folkloric & electronic gadgets
Romare Bearden crossed over the rainbow in a blimp made of
his collages & etchings
Norman Lewis pushed away from the shore in a vault shaped like a
[bicycle
Ed Blackwell marched off concealed in an assortment of cymbals
Tchikaya U'Tamsi floated away in a big heart shaped tuba
Vivian Browne departed draped in her painted forest canvases
Larry Neal went to the bush enclosed in two bookcases of poetry &
Bebop tapes
Kimako Baraka evacuated in a stone temple marked with Egyptian
[hieroglyphics
Wilfred Cartey got away from the hurricane in an ocean liner made of
rum bottles
Johnny Makatini took off in a black, green & yellow rocket
Kathy Collins departed in a container made of unedited film clips
John Carter left in a fabulous silver clarinet
Evan Walker split in a boat that was shaped like a bird
Dumile Feni hurried to South Africa in one of his muscle bound
wooden sculptures

Peter Tosh reached the intersection in a bus filled with herbs &
political newspapers
Bob Marley retreated in a booming amplifier draped in
African flags tied with dreadlocks
Ana Mendieta made her exit as a bronze silueta
Michael Smith left for the forest in one huge audio cassette case
Elena & Jawa Apronti traveled from Accra in compartments made of
ceremonial umbrellas
Bill Majors rode off into the sunset in a highly polished brass
mercedes benz
Coco Anderson went to the festival in a fixture shaped like
a yam wrapped with eight patchwork quilts
Franco Manqwana rolled off in a king-size purple guitar
Nicolas Guillen went to the rendezvous in a grand rumba cow-bell
Tamu Bess traveled home in a queen-size computer plastered with
[eyeglasses
Flora Nwapa crossed the horizon concealed in pages of her new novel
Sarah Vaughan ascended in a misty glass recording booth
Gilberto de La Nuez disappeared into one of his paintings in Havana

INGEBORG BACHMANN

TWO POEMS

(Tr. from the German
by Peter Filkins)

IN TWILIGHT

Again we both stretch our hands towards the fire,
you reaching for the wine of the seasoned night,
I for morning's wellspring that knows no winery.
We await the bellows of the master in whom we trust.

As sorrow warms him, the glassblower steps toward us.
He leaves before dawn, he comes before you call,
he's as old as the twilight on our singed brows.

Again he boils the lead in the kettle of tears,
making for you a glass—meaning a toast to the lost—
for me a potsherd of smoke—it's emptied over the fire.
And so I lean towards you, making the shadows ring.

Known now is he who hesitates,
known now is he who forgot a proper toast.
You can't and don't want to know it
you drink from the rim where it's cool;
you drink and stay sober, and like long ago
eyes lift up to you, still admiring you!

But I am already prepared
for the moment of love, smashing its shards
in the fire, where they return to the lead
they once were. And behind the bullet
I stand, one-eyed, with a steady aim, slender,
and shoot it towards the morning.

PSALM

1

Be silent with me, as all bells are silent!

Amid the afterbirth of terror
the rabble grovels for new nourishment.
On Good Friday a hand hangs on display
in the firmament, two fingers missing,
and it cannot swear that all of it,
all of it didn't happen, nor that
it ever will. It dives into red clouds
whisks off the new murderers
and goes free.

Each night on this earth
open the windows, fold back the sheets
so that the invalid's secret lies naked,
a sore full of sustenance, endless pain
for every taste.

Gloved butchers cease
the breath of the naked;
the moon in the doorway falls to earth;
let the pieces lie, the handle. . .

All was readied for the last rites.
(The sacrament cannot be completed.)

2

How vain it all is.
Roll on a city,
rise from the city's dust,
take a post
and disguise yourself
to avoid exposure.

Fulfill the promises
before a tarnished mirror in the air,
before a shut door in the wind.

Untraveled are the paths on the steep slope of heaven.

3

O eyes, scorched by the store of sun on earth,
weighted with the rain of all eyes,
and now absorbed, interwoven
by the tragic spiders
of the present. . .

4

In the hollow of my muteness
lay a word
and raise tall forests on both sides,
such that my mouth
lies wholly in shade.

JED RASULA

GENDERING THE MUSE

The human being, troubled by limits, creates a trip for herself,
which recreates her
as spacious.
. . .She creates a dark flank of a mountain, a person's thoughts or
feelings, passing across the person, concealing the person.
She wonders what the body would reveal, if the cloud were
transparent.
It pervades the creation of a motive, like the action of a heart.[1]

It has long been one of the primary labors of poetry to incorporate the strange and the other into its procedures; to speak "otherwise" (alieniloquiam); to be visited by Muses, those agents of otherness. A poetics apprehends the ratios of shapeliness, re-cognition in the sense not of knowing again, but having to reconceive and regenerate the apparition. *We conceive ourselves in our hybrids;* not to extract an essence by pruning away extraneous matter, but by coming to acknowledge the raw *materia prima* itself as part of the alembic: "I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss, fruits, grains, esculent roots, / And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over" writes Whitman. ("Song of Myself," #31) Western poetry has long worn on its theoretical regalia the heraldry of the Muses. But the complex signification of "muse" has been eroded to a single persistent epithet, making Muse synonymous with "inspiration." This simplification is the legacy of a masculinist project of poetic autonomy, in which the Muse is merely a figurative indication of innate imaginal potency; it is also a covert disavowal of those perturbations of the alien that are found in Hellenic myths of the Muse. To speak of Muses is to speak of a contamination not unlike pregnance. A woman feeling her own singularity enhanced by the growth in her womb finds this ambiguous individuation utterly contingent on the progressive enlargement of the absolute other she bears within her. No matter how ardently desired or serenely accepted, to bear the progeny of a decisive contact with the other is unsettling, uncanny.

It may be true that what we've grown accustomed to calling poetry resonates a colossal solipsism. But solipsism itself needs to be recognized as a predominately male prerogative. Masculine vitality is troubled by the enormity of its own reproductive deficiency. That men don't give birth is one of the more thoroughly repressed of cultural traumas. Poetry has been another name for this anxiety, if not an outright compensation; but poetry may also be the most persistent channel by which the ecology of reproduction is transmitted from female to male, as in the scenarios of poetic empowerment involving the figure of the Muse. In Jung's typology of the contributing personae of individuation, "The inferior function is always associated with an archaic personality in ourselves. . . There we have an open wound, or at least an open door through which anything might enter."[2] For men the inferior function (all too susceptible of expiatory projection and reassignment outside and elsewhere, literalized in woman) is the birthing complex—and by "complex" I mean an array spanning menstruation, pregnancy, parturition, and nursing. Gary Snyder speaks of the Muse tradition as affording a glimpse of "archaic matrifocal roots": "It is likely that men become creative when they touch the woman in themselves, and women become creative when they touch the woman in the man in themselves."[3] This asymmetrical formulation reflects an historical disproportion[4]; one that is distended by emphasizing subjectivity as the necessary focus of poetry. Curiously, even Snyder (a Buddhist!) makes the same mistake when he notes that, "As Vak is wife to Brahma ('wife' means 'wave' means 'vibrator' in Indo-European etymology) so the voice, in everyone, is a mirror of his own deepest self."[5] Personification for men involves a person-fiction; a speech endowment with woman as the enabling voice-over paradoxically silenced by the pact of transference. The male poet, pregnant with words, willingly submits to the gnosis but is at the same time traumatized by the maternal posture. The Muse (prior to sanitized abridgement as the simple figure of inspiration) retains the "monstrous"—that is, *demonstrable* [monstrare=show, disclose]—link between inspiration and pregnance, masculine speech and maternal prompting.

One of the primal episodes of poetic empowerment in Western typology is Hesiod's encounter with the Helikonian Muses, who tell him "we know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we want to, how to tell the truth."[6] He consents to be inspired by the Muses, who literally breathe into him a purportedly divine voice. To be inspired by Muses is to be filled with their spirit, a breath or *pneuma* which may or may not coincide with truth. This confidential insinuation of another's voice into the poet's own mouth and words involves ventriloquism; and the truth of words, in this scenario, is bound up with the problem of "voice" as security deposit on any subsequent claim

of authenticity. By the time the Muse tradition is synopsized as "inspiration," the ventriloquial component is forgotten, and the autonomous controlling voice of the poem is confidently masculine, becoming the paradigmatic mark of subjectivity. With Hesiod the world itself is compacted into a single compelling (yet alien) voice inside the head—and it's only a matter of time until Descartes condenses even the figure of the human to a glistening mote of ego, in which a voice persists, if only as a technical simulation. Poetry henceforth develops an alliance with subjectivity, requiring compulsory speech from a world (of "muses") that had hitherto resounded freely, but which now begins to endure its lengthy subjugation to the human subject, and in its subjugation develops that sullen, unspeaking demeanor that its masters read as evidence of a brute, unresponsive nature (Caliban to Prospero). Cartesian subjectivity demands of the voice-over that it offer compelling evidence of its resources and its identity—that it testify on its own behalf. Voice-over is to be the authentic, inspired version of the voice as such. Any experience of voice that resists such alignment is evidence of demonic intervention, psychological neurosis, or technical malfunction, and gender has been the generic fate of these technical malfunctions, this material disarray.

It's difficult to overlook the fact of gender in primal scenes. It might be said, in fact, that gender *is* the primal scene. Female Muses enable Hesiod's theogony. This episode involves a transition from *bios* to *techne* in the matter of voice-over, and it happens that gender is more than a material detail; it is, in fact, a basic term for the ambiguous transit between nature and culture, biology and tool. Bearing in mind that gender is often construed as prediscursive or mute facticity[7], Hesiod's relation to the Muses illustrates the process by which the male voice of poetic authority is underwritten by a female voice-over: his poem is not so much "inspired" (in the convention to which we're accustomed) as it is pre-articulated inside him, in a voice that is differently gendered.[8] To experience voice as inner—that is, as *unvoiced*—is to be initiated in the emergence of gender, particularly gender understood in affiliation with genius.

The Muses fulfill the role later attributed to Genius in the middle ages. The legacy of *catabasis* or infernal descent memorialized in the Orphic myth, in the *Odyssey,* and the *Aeneid,* was reconfigured in late antiquity (most influentially by Macrobius) as the descent of the rational soul into the snares of a sublunar material world. Hellenic sources relate *catabasis* to a wisdom tradition, in which the hero undertakes a ritual descent for oracular consultation in the underworld. In Christian reconfigurations the infernal aspect was emphasized, inflecting *catabasis* with transgressions of the black arts. In late antiquity and the middle ages the figure embodying this power of descent was Genius, a "god of human nature" and "external double" susceptible to good and evil influences. As cosmic messengers (Di

Manes, Greek *daemones)* these commanding spirits were Latinized as the *genius* of the individual; and, as adapted to Christianity, genius bifurcates into the beneficent angel on the one hand and the renegade angel (for Milton) or evil demon (for Descartes) on the other.[9] The significance of Genius for my purposes has to do with the persistence of Orpheus as a Genius figure. In his commentary on the *Aeneid* (c. 1145), Bernardus Silvestris deploys the familiar medieval concept of the soul descended into the body in order to discriminate "vicious" from "virtuous" descents, exemplified by Eurydice and Orpheus respectively. Eurydice disappears permanently into the underworld, unretrieveable by Orpheus, much as her 'spirit' may be said to live on in his commemorative songs. The Muses likewise are subsumed into Hesiod's inspiration. I don't mean to reduce these tales to varieties of the sexist dictum that behind every successful man there's a good woman, but the *structural* parallel is obvious and notable. In the primal scenes of Western poetry the voice-over is female (Muses, Echo) or the voice of the poet is indebted to a vanished woman (Eurydice). The lure of the female voice is nowhere more powerfully configured than in another primal scene, Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens.

Odysseus has his crew stuff their ears with wax so as not to hear the Sirens (wax being a substance linked with bees and thus also with the Bee Maidens of the "Hymn to Hermes"). Odysseus, preferring to hear the enchanting voices, opts to have himself lashed to the mast of his ship (yet another poeticosm: the mast being wood, a sort of marine Ygdrassil). The scene has all the elements of an electrical generator, with positive and negative charges involving different sorts of conductivity (wax and wood), *both* of which require contact points (the sailors and Odysseus). The voices of the Sirens, then, which represent an overpowering lure to destruction, are mediated by this sophisticated technical intervention.

Like the Muses, the Sirens offer the bewitching assurance of panoptic vision and encyclopedic wisdom. This allure is congruent with that expeditionary compulsion in man to ferret out the secrets of nature-as-woman. No man's poem (Odysseus being, in his subterfuge, *'outis* or "No Man") can successfully embody the heroic ego unless it emancipates itself from the female voice-over, a prospect addressed by the dual maneuver of fastidious attention (Odysseus lashed to the mast) and denial (the restraints themselves). Pietro Pucci explicitly reads the scene as a commentary on poetics. "No text," he says, "can incorporate the titillating promise of a song as sublime as the Sirens' without implying that this same sublimity resides in the incorporating text itself." Consequently, "The Sirens' song is thus the negative, absent song that enables its replacement—the *Odyssey*—to become what it is."[10] Pucci fails to recognize the clear gender distribution of advantage and enterprise suggested by his reading—which is all the more astounding given the vocabulary he uses to describe Odysseus' plight

as it "oscillates between (innocent) titillation and destructive intoxication," and Odysseus' solution as one combining "the fascination of an endless song and a restraining prudence."

We have to go back to Horkheimer and Adorno for a recognition of the patriarchal legislation instigated in Odysseus' twofold subjugation—of his sailors, who "cannot enjoy their labor because it is performed under pressure, in desperation, with senses stopped by force," and of the Sirens themselves, who are driven to suicide should anyone hearing their song pass by undistracted. The technical solution Odysseus devises to deal with the Sirens' temptation is taken by Horkheimer and Adorno as a "presentient allegory of the dialectic of enlightenment," in which "The curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression."[11] That is, enslavement of the workers makes for industrial progress; but the masters stunt their own libidinal natures by means of such wily constraints as Odysseus devises for himself, so he can voyeuristically entertain the Sirens' song without committing to it, which is a paradigmatic form of regression.

Devoted to the autonomy latent in his power of invention, Odysseus is infantilized by his own reverie of technical achievement—the ruse by which he bypasses the Sirens, which takes place alongside all the other ruses that are the mementos of his voyage and commemoration of his survival skills, in a kind of gallery or grand concourse of fantastic escapes (escape as invention). The Sirens become the voice-over of his progress, formally denied even while their very existence becomes a goad to superheroic sublimation and productivity. Horkheimer and Adorno find an uncanny prescience in this tale, one which testifies in advance to the derangements of the heroic ego as it develops into that bourgeois stratagem (subjectivity) for calibrating human nature to the myth of rational progress. "The social work of every individual in bourgeois society is mediated through the principle of self," they write. (29) "Men had to do fearful things to themselves [i.e. don constraints before the Sirens] before the self the identical, purposive, and virile nature of man, was formed, and something of that recurs in every childhood." (33) The gendering of their formulation is precise. Sensory ravishment, associated with women, yields male rectitude if sublimated. Enlightened productivity works, then, by framing episodes of feminine allure as incentives to masculine self-regulation. The result is a simple homeostatically regulated machine (with woman as servomechanism) which Horkheimer and Adorno rightly see as an allegory of industrial bourgeois society, a society that clings to its primal scenes only in sanitized versions, fearful of the prerational imagination that clearly invests these scenes not only with an "obsolete" world view, but an *alternative* mode of social production.

To glimpse the alternative latent in the Sirens' song, it's necessary to delve into a broader range of associations than the Homeric account

deploys. The name "Sirens" may derive from the Asiatic "sîr" or *fascination*. But *seirenes* in its masculine form designated a strain of bees.[12] Unlike the Muses, whose activities are consecrated to their father, Zeus, the masculine affiliations of the Sirens are less clear. There is a genealogy in which the Sirens were offspring of Chthonos and Persephone; in another version one of the Muses bore them to the sea god Achelöos. Most tantalizing is the version in which Herakles breaks off one of Achelöos' horns, and the Sirens are born from the blood of this rupture. Not only are the Sirens typologically assimilated to something like the birth of Athena from Zeus' head, then, but the phallic/menstrual paradigm is explicit as well. As if this blurring of gender were not enough, there are visual representations of the Sirens as bearded women. The link with Persephone affords the Sirens a special conductivity to the underworld and the queen of the dead, who is notably also affiliated through her daughter Demeter with vegetal cycles of resurrection and replenishment. The names of individual Sirens are variable, or unstable, but cluster around certain connotations: "enchantress" (Thelxiope and variants), "the seductive" (Peisonoe etc.), and "she of the glorious voice" (Aglaope etc.). There are also Himeropa ("she whose voice awakens desire"), Leucosia (the white goddess), and Ligeia ("she of the bright voice"). While there is no sibling allegiance suggested by the lineage, note that the Sirens share with Orpheus a maternal link with the Muses and that their names explicitly refer to voice (Orpheus is derived from *orea phone* meaning best voice, *optima vox*[13]). Finally, there is a passage in Plutarch that maintains a positive rather than negative role for the Sirens' association with the underworld. The power of their song is not destructive, he says—in terms related to what by Plutarch's time was a no longer orthodox Pythagoreanism diffused in the Roman world—but is rather an echo of that harmony of the spheres from which souls descend into matter.

> The ears of most souls, however, are plastered over and blocked up, not with wax, but with carnal obstructions and affections. But any soul that through innate gifts is aware of this echo, and remembers that other world, suffers what falls in no way short of the very maddest passions of love, longing and yearning to break the tie with the body, but unable to do so.[14]

While not exactly beneficent, then, for Plutarch the Sirens are bewitching to the degree that they offer an expanded cosmological resonance, raising those who hear above the limited circuit of mortal attachments.

The Sirens are contagious, infecting the hero with a performance anxiety—in a sense suggested by Blanchot's provocative reading:

> What would happen. . .if Homer's story were nothing but the movement Ulysses enacts in the space created for him by the Sirens' song? If Homer could only tell his story in so far as he journeyed, in the name of Ulysses—an unfettered yet predictable Ulysses—towards the point where he may perhaps acquire the ability to speak and to narrate, on the one condition that, at this point, he vanish?

Note the motif of effacement here which evidently links the Sirens' song with the parable of Orpheus and Eurydice in Blanchot's imagination. He sees in this tale the goad that enables a leap from ode to episode, from song or lyric to narration: "Every narration secretly resists the encounter with the Sirens," he intuits.[15] The closing lines of John Ashbery's poem "The Explanation" suggest that the most durable incentive for such resistance is the power of self-replenishment: "What am I doing up here? / Pretending to resist but secretly giving in so as to reappear / In a completely new outfit and group of colors once today's / Bandage has been removed, is all."[16] Narrative is masculine cross-dressing (in which a nursing function is implicit in the "bandage"). Blanchot's hunch about the Sirens is in accord with Teresa de Lauretis' theory of narrative as the mythical structuring of differences, foremost of which is the gendering of (male) protagonist and (female) matrix of resistance. (De Lauretis' antimonies, most succinctly, are "male-hero-human" versus "female-obstacle-boundary-space."[17]) The Sirens could easily be accommodated to de Lauretis' observation that "Medusa and the Sphinx, like the other ancient monsters, have survived inscribed in hero narratives, in someone else's story, not their own; so they are figures or markers of positions—places and topoi—through which the hero and his story move to their destination and to accomplish meaning." (109) In keeping with Judith Butler's admonition that gender is performative, not innate, I want to convert this primal scene into a scenario in which voice (specifically poetry's voice-over) is both *engendered* and *engineered.* Odysseus' ship is a factory (Horkheimer and Adorno) which industrially processes the raw material of ecstatic celebratory song into the prophetic and agonistic material of narrative (Blanchot), the reagent being monstrously feminized in the process (de Lauretis). Narrative is a foundry, in which narratological (and I should stress the logical) techniques filter out and set aside the female *prima materia,* without which there is no engendering heat, but the presence of which requires purification ("rites" in antiquity, "procedures" in modernity).

In the primal scene of poetic inspiration, the volatility of the medium itself is indistinguishable from that cauldron of subjectivity that can only be tamed or quenched by the special linguistic and cultural technique of gender. "The 'real' and the 'sexually factic' are phantasmatic construc-

tions—illusions of substance—that bodies are compelled to approximate, but never can. . . . Just as bodily surfaces are enacted *as* the natural, so these surfaces can become the site of a dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself."[18] The issue of the gendered voice is not simply a matter of authority, then. The archaic resources of language trouble authority even before it establishes itself: the *Odyssey* is an epic of erotic *vocations* that disturb the man who would be king. The narrative that engenders his triumph must submit to an itinerary of other voices, a polyphony that is sampled and synthesized, as it were, into an access code. The voice of heroic epic is masculine, reverberating in compassionate timbre with the voice of the hero since the hero is merely a figure for the engineering miracle that has generated the tale and at the same time gendered it.

The Odyssean legacy holds firm for several thousand years until the ventriloquism involved is exposed in the figure of Molly Bloom (on whose affirmative gasps entire legions of critics have expired in the line of duty, like the bones of sailors at the feet of the Sirens): ". . .yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes. . ." James Joyce, the ostensible transformer of female *jouissance* into text, appears to yield his tongue to a womanly satisfaction (which is figured, in turn, as amatory yielding). But this famous episode is the culmination of a dizzying spiral of manipulations, and the attribution of male authorship to a monologue enshrined as exemplary of femininity transforms aesthetic gratification into an anxious, if not paranoid, euphoria. What is at issue is never so simply the right to speak, but the timbre of the voice that finally does speak, especially when the "universal" is at stake. The semantic sense of the words may be abstracted from the sensory provocation of the voice, but the primal scenes of poetry compel attention to the dismemberments implied by such abstraction.

In a prescient lament early in *After Babel,* George Steiner notes how "[f]ew artists. . .have rendered the genius of women's speech."[19] His writing is impassioned by a sense of injustice (and he went on to devote an entire study to the figure of Antigone). But it's a speculative aside which interests me: "The alleged outpourings of women's speech, the rank flow of words, may be a symbolic restatement of men's apprehensive, often ignorant awareness of the menstrual cycle." The reproductive matrix of biology is felt as a speech disturbance. The staging of voice as expressive index of subjectivity is a cultural technique, a performative stratagem. Steiner's speculation suggests that a demonstrably natural process impinges conceptually on culture: reproduction *precedes* "production"—a semantic reversal which the tautological predications of narrative strive to overcome. Poetry,

in its autoinscriptions of inspiration as natural endowment, engineers techniques for ventriloquizing the female into a male voice. Even while testifying to gender asymmetry, this reveals a chiasmatic intertwining of voices sustaining any act of inspired articulation. Language engenders humans before humans gender language (and in the declension of pronouns the most vital distinctions are not male and female, but self and other, singular and plural). But insofar as language incites a technological impetus to discriminate and recombine, to focus and then dissipate the focus, language is a *hominid* perturbation.[20]

Jan Zwicky identifies in lyric a recuperative venture, consequent upon her definition of humans as creatures "on whom the ontological alienation inherent in tool-use weighs so heavily that they must try to rescue themselves from it."[21] Lyric is not a tool but a desire that asserts itself as counter-tool, like Robert Frost's "counter-love": "Lyric springs from the desire to recapture the intuited wholeness of the non-linguistic world, to heal the slash in the mind that is the capacity for language," Zwicky writes, adding that "as language-using creatures, it is of our essence that that gap cannot be permanently healed. The recognition that it cannot is the source of lyric's poignancy." The cognitive gap that can't recover from technological traumatization pivots on sexual difference, which is as it were the place where *techne* applies pressure. Sexual difference, then, may be viewed as a biological datum which it is the labor of culture to manifest. Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove have charted the mythic resonance of such connections in *The Wise Wound,* and it is clear that primal scenes of poetic initiation are not incidentally, but *primarily,* gendered; and that menstruation marks a site at which the force called "Muse" may arise.

Giorgio Agamben, in *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture,* elaborates a tacitly gendered thesis in his advocacy of a Sphinxian over an Oedipal linguistics. Every linguistics dedicated to transcending or healing the split between signifier and signified adheres to the Oedipal paradigm, in Agamben's view; while "under the sign of the Sphinx must be placed every theory of the symbol that, refusing the model of Oedipus, focuses its attention above all on the barrier between signifier and signified that constitutes the original problem of signification."[22] Agamben would overcome the view of metaphor and of signification in general as transfer or cartage across the divide, favoring instead a double positioning, an alignment on both sides of a barrier. The barrier ("S/s" between signified and signifier) necessarily remains in place. Instead of a view of signification intent on equivalencies, encodings, transparencies, the linguistics of the Sphinx marks a distribution of obstacles, dangers, powers. The barrier must remain, in part because to remove it is to conscript one of the agents of the communicative circuit to its role.

The function of the barrier is to retain for the agents in an intercommunicative pact their status *as* agents; without the barrier (as in Oedipal linguistics) one party is forced to embody the barrier's role as recalcitrant materiality. The status of woman as matter, matrix, impurity derives from the collapse of this barrier. Without the barrier, the function of power and danger is invested in woman, who is aligned with equivocations purportedly constitutive of her own divided nature (human/animal, insider/outsider, spirit/body). But what is this "barrier" Agamben speaks of? It is, most obviously, the Saussurean "bar" ("S/s") that signals the expressive unity of signifier and signified; but it is also that which is reiterated in Greek metaphysics as the distinction between essence and appearance, presence and absence, the one and the many, and which is perpetuated by distinctions between content and form, text and interpretation. These bifurcations are not merely descriptive of a given condition but *constitutive* of an ongoing one—that is, they are cultural specifications of what a pre-cultural condition should look like.

Oedipus is for Agamben a figure of that impulse to dispel the enigma of being and language by solving riddles, disposing of the barrier by insisting on its transparency. However, "Like the labyrinth, like the Gorgon, and like the Sphinx that utters it, the enigma belongs to the sphere of the apotropaic, that is, to a protective power that repels the uncanny by attracting it and assuming it within itself." (Apotropaic: *apo-* means lack, separation, departure, thus compounding the sense of *trope* as turning away, turning aside. An apotropaic configuration, like the visage of the Sphinx, is at once a personification and a depersonalization.[23]) The bar is the face of saying, the mask of signification; and the monstrosity of its apparition is not separable from the utterance. This is the sense behind Heraclitus' reference to the Delphic oracle who "neither says *(legei)* nor conceals *(kryptei)*, but signifies *(semainei)*." I read "semainei" in the strong sense as *incarnates*. Signification requires paying a carnal debt to the Sphinx, that hybrid creature who exacts the toll of enigma from language. Enigma, is the realm of words, is what the monster is in society.

To psychologize the encounter between Oedipus and the Sphinx is to mistake the hermetic dispensation of the myth, particularly by attributing to the Sphinx a suicidal mortification at the solving of her riddle. Rather, we should say that the assertion of Oedipal priorities destroys the apotropaic resources carefully measured out in the "monstrosity" of the Sphinx. That the Sphinx is feminized is in part the measure of the monstrosity of Oedipus' own discovery about his relation with a woman. After all, he discovers nothing horrifying about woman as such, but about himself. That a woman is the bearer of the riddle of his misfortune is of course sufficient ground for Teresa de Lauretis' rebuke of the fundamental misogyny of Western forms of narration and the gendering of the hero as

male. But I would caution against too simple an equation of Sphinx with woman. Rachel Blau DuPlessis usefully distinguishes external from internal cultural zones. "A woman outside the gates of culture is called a sphinx, inside called a heroine."[24] The Sphinx is *outside,* but from a woman's perspective it is specifically an outside endowed with power and independence. It is also an "outside" as liminal exposure to a severe difference in which woman gives way (through monstrous metamorphosis) to something not altogether human. The Sphinx is a threshold into another dimension, the *understanding* (not the "essence") of which has something to do with womanliness—increasingly and ominously so in a phallocratic regime.

Language, insofar as it is associated with woman, is inducted into a fecund or generative region. This archaic association of woman with generation needs to be qualified by the linguistic root *gn* (or *gen)* puts us in touch with knowledge as well as sexual power. "This [Indo-European] root is so prolific," writes Joseph Shipley, "that some scholars divide it in two. It defies partition. For its two meanings, to know and to beget, continue to entwine through the linguistic changes."[25] It's by means of this root that English retains its peculiar spelling of *know.* This is an instance of etymological retention, and the begetting of cognates (in which the *gn* is embedded, by the way) participates abundantly in this retention: gnosis, cognition, ignite, kindle, kin, lingam, cunning, cunt, genital, generation, and pregnant are a few of the English residues of this ceaselessly fertile linguistic egg—in fact, the word *language* itself propounds it. I want to supplement this with the research by Bethe Hagens into the "venus figurines" so prevalent in Cro-Magnon sites. Hagens discovers, from a biosemiotic perspective, that characteristic forms like the famous Venus of Lespuges are not so simply interpretable as fertility emblems. A survey of the extant set of such figures reveals a basic geometric proportion that coincides with tantalizing precision to the lateral views of animal brains. That the brain of a frog or a rabbit is as eligible a visual prototype for the Venus figurines as the body of a human woman Hagens takes as evidence of the psychotropic/shamanistic orientation of early hominid cultures. The extensive archaeological network constituted by these figurines suggests that "[t]hey constitute the remains of an ancient transportation network, both nonpolluting and nonmaterial. They are the essence, the 'elite power base,' of shamanic spirit travel."[26] The point here is not the veracity of Hagens' speculations, but the archaeological affirmation of an etymological link between gender and genius. This is not to say that intelligence is gender specific, of course, but to recognize that generation (or generativity) is a labor of "love" only if such labor includes mind. That is: from a shamanistic, and perhaps a Paleolithic, perspective, meaning and being are indissolubly linked.

Genesis and genius coincide. In this ancient legacy *every* creative act is empowered to the degree that it is constituted in and by the enigma of gender. Inasmuch as the Sphinx poses a linguistic riddle as the condition of life (those who fail the test are devoured), language itself is revealed to be caught up in a productive emanation. The monstrosity of the Sphinx is an apotropaic impingement on the dream of autonomous speech, unfettered articulation, uncoerced meaning; and, by the same token, an insistence on the prodigality of creative emanation—that meaning *and* being are not so easily retained within the prophylactic contours of Oedipal and Odyssean quests—quests that have lately acquired a different configuration in the prosthetic armature of cyborgian telepresence. The speculative fantasies summoned around the potential of cyberspace and cyberspecies appear thoroughly caught up in an Oedipal desire for prediscursive autonomy coupled with sanitary bioengineering: that is, in pursuit of a subjectivity cleansed of the messy constraints of gender, enigma, and poetry.

The apotropaic is the mark of excess, of unmanageable proliferation: human-becoming-animal, sense-becoming-nonsense. Polymorphously perverse, as Norman O. Brown proclaimed in *Love's Body*(1968), but which he came to reconsider in 1990 under the tutelage of Bataille: "meaning is always surplus meaning," under the sway of "a universal principle of biological life that growth leads to excess: and excess leads to laceration and loss."[27] Brown affirms exuberance, but insists on a Dionysian exuberant excess. Contra Lacan, lack is culmination, not beginning. It is that discharge or leakage that punctures security, related to that onset of the final stage of labor when the bag of amniotic fluid bursts. But it's a puncture the swollen state of security yearns for. Brown famously ended *Love's Body* with the declaration "There is only poetry." He has been tardy, perhaps, in recognizing the need to understand how we go from *bios* or embodiment to the specific cultural staging of embodiment that is poetry, or as I've been considering it here, poetry as a *techne* of Muses. In "Dionysus in 1990" he returns to Freud, specifically to the Freudian hypothesis of an instructive link between femininity and masochism. In Brown's formulation: "Erotic mysticism has always known that the wound is the woman, and we are all not made whole until we are first wounded." (195) (Menstruation constitutes the ultimate blood rite, a somatic purification that serves as a living injunction from nature to culture, a provocation to regulation, *regula,* measure. Is it too much to imagine poetic metre or even mathematics as an elaboration of menstrual computation? We have yet to see a history of numbers that positions communities of gynopractitioners in any founding relation to the subject.) To be "wounded" is to be womanized—a term instructively contrasted with the "humanities," with those cultural forms that are said to humanize us: for the humanities are indeed a mode of

masculinist self-assertion, a strategic denial not simply of women but of what *woman* signifies. And, in the terms with which I've been considering the inaugural gestures of poetry: of the waywardness of signification itself as the chiasmus of knowledge and generation. The Muses and the Sirens and the Sphinx are names for an incentive to regard the pain of knowing, and in the specification of a gender the pain is named. "Genius," says Emerson, "is the activity which repairs the decay of things. . ."[28] The monstrosity of the Sphinx *is* that genius; and, as such, is not an obstacle to be overcome but a sign of difficulties and trials to which we repair.

Recently, Jean-Joseph Goux has offered a stunning reconceptualization of the entire Oedipal trajectory, in which Oedipus represents "a tragedy of failed initiation."[29] In Goux's version, the Sphinx is an agent of liminality, requiring specifically the sacrifice of the secular ego in an initiatory submission to radical alterity. Goux sees in the power of the Sphinx that cultic intervention in which (following Freud) that which is properly located at the threshold of maturity is relegated to infancy. Castration, for Freud, was an infantile threat that could never be properly resolved. But Goux reverses this to suggest that the Oedipal "solution" of the castrating riddle of the Sphinx is precisely the gesture that inaugurates this perpetual deferral of castration resolution. Oedipal man thus endures a lifetime of "deferred initiation":

> Modern man's destiny will be one of prolonged liminality, experienced in an uncompletable, open, undecidable process of auto-initiation. Modern filiarchal subjectivity is one of liminality that has become an endless process rather than a passage. All of existence has become the critical threshold. (203)

Oedipus installs rationality as a tactical *coup* over an older regime that specifically required the sacrifice of reason, a sacrifice intended to instruct the initiate in the *ratio* of an order within which the rational might assess its own limits. By contrast, the Sphinx insists on an ecological violation of self-assured rationality, potentially unbounded in its hubris unless checked by humility ("castration"). Without such measures, there is simply a perpetual deferral of the discerning of limits, and the hubristic madness of Oedipal autonomy becomes nothing less than the paradigm of Western reason.

Oedipus, Philosopher portrays philosophy as the filiarchal banishment of pre-Oedipal forms of a patriarchal/matriarchal initiatory wisdom.[30]

> The Oedipean structure of pathos and knowledge is thus the distinctive feature of the post-traditional world in which the

> dramaturgy of transmission has entirely disappeared as an established social practice and in which the passage through castration (separation, severing) remains free, individual, self-generated, and in a sense deferred, permanent, indefinite. The historical world would thus be not so much a world in which the process of initiation has disappeared as a world in which no one is ever done with it—a world of the son, who structurally, fundamentally, cannot stabilize himself in the knowing posture of the father: a world of prolonged liminality. In short, a world of (permanent, provisional, repeated) auto-institution, thus of history. (205-206)

This auto-institution inscribes the philosopher-king with an impossible double obligation: to bear the indelible mark of rational sovereignty, but at the same time to be unmarked by disfiguring trauma, and thus always paranoiacally sensitized to the trauma yet to come, the trauma of succession, revolution, overthrow. If "history" is the permanently unstable world of "auto-institution," then *pre-history* would consist of an ability to regulate catastrophic dispossession, to incorporate loss into the life-cycle rather than project it into the aleatory numbers game of History. The wound of reason, not admitting impediment in itself, nor conceding the need for excess (whether as performativity in gender, Dionysian madness, etc.), feels the very atmosphere pregnant with omens of rupture and downfall. The other wound—the "wound" of the other—is not catastrophic but strophic or *tropic*, tropologically generative. It's tendentious to confine woman to a symbolically bifurcated position of subordination; but what I've been outlining here is the trauma that attends to the correspondingly claustrophobic confinement of male rationality to that proverbial "waiting room," outside and insulated from the primal scene of birth. The anxiety of male inspiration (facilitated by Muses) has to do with contamination and loss of control; exile from the theatre of operations; initiation into lack.[31] We still feel the lack, but have forgotten the power of initiation, the ceremonial induction into another (a numinous) order.

The menstrual substrate of the Muse tradition speaks of discharge as regeneration—an instance of "unproductive expenditure" well in advance of Bataille's theorizing—but it also confers this acknowledgment as *praxis*. As *enigma*, a word in which the primal ***gn*** root embeds wisdom and pregnance, reproduction is not a tautology that woman embodies but a ritual *techne* invoking initiatory measures, ratios, and pragmata; a liminal threshold of mesmerizing and confounding generativity. The Muse incarnates a complex manifold of instructions, and it is only in the long attrition represented by Western poetry's reduction of muse to a figure of inspiration, a stimulant or narcotic, that the gnosis of dispossession is

abased, and in its place arises the confident assertion of subjectivity as the proper use of a placid medium. By the time Rimbaud proclaimed himself as the other, it was a gesture played out against the vacancy of what had formerly been confoundingly potent with Muses, however much his insurgence clamored for a retrieval of the lost Muse. DuPlessis' insistence on exploring the structure of donations incumbent on women caught between the roles of muse and poetess reveals, in the case of H.D. at least, a curious turn: the muse as "emotional institution" compels a female assertion of order in a matrix already oppressively charged with orders, laws, rules. So H.D. derives, from the complex layering of family and social romance(s), a "multiple family muse," a way of transforming contending Muses into a structure of filiations.[32] Persuasive as this account is in the case of H.D., it tends to redirect attention to the family romance, the Oedipal complex; which is to say, to the nuclear stronghold of phallocentrism. What remains to be taken up is that induction into an order truly strange, one not recuperative as is H.D.'s, but involving *coup* or capture (as of wild animals), in which inspiration is fully at the disposal of the initiatory momentum: not making the device strange, as in Russian Formalism and German Expressionism, but making oneself strange as well. One by one, each by each. Not "other," but *us*.

Notes

1 Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge, "Honeymoon," *Empathy* (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1989), p. 76.

2 Quoted in Peter Redgrove and Penelope Shuttle, *The Wise Wound: The Myths, Realities, and Meanings of Menstruation* revised ed. (New York: Grove, 1988), p. 316.

3 "Foreword" to Edward Schafer, *The Divine Woman: Dragon Ladies and Rain Maidens in T'ang Literature* (San Francisco: North Point, 1980), p. xi.

4 Rachel Blau DuPlessis considers the prospective formula "male muse for female poet = female muse for male poet" and sees immediately the imbalance: "Simple reciprocity? No. Wrong valence. Unbalanced equation. For everywhere the grave social and cultural asymmetry between the sexes impedes this simplicity." *The Pink Guitar* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 36.

5 *Earth House Hold: Technical Notes & Queries To Fellow Dharma Revolutionaries* (New York: New Directions, 1969), p. 125. On the other hand, Snyder clearly recognizes the fundamental alterity of poetry: "The voice of inspiration as an 'other' has long been known in the West as The Muse. Widely speaking, the muse is anything other that touches you and moves you. Be it a mountain range, a band of people, the morning star, or a diesel generator." (124)

6 *Theogeny* I.26-28.

7 "Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pregiven sex (a juridical conception); gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. As a result, gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface *on which* culture acts." Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 7.

8 The difference is at once precarious and foundational. Irigaray in *Marine Lover* writes an echolalia of Nietzsche, reiterating his charms and in the process unveiling his text: "The most powerful effect of women: to double for men, sublime souls." Remember that Irigaray here *is* Nietzsche, but with that gendered *difference* intact. "To give body—and with no difference—to their ideals. And as those ideals are the gods of the language: to give them voice, foundation—material for transcendental productions." However, "The empire of the word cannot do without the ear and the voice if it is to reproduce itself. But those still fleshly mediums are to be left to woman." (109)

9 See Jane C. Nietzsche, *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), chapter two. The quoted phrases in my account are from pages 3 and 4.

10 *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the* Odyssey *and the* Iliad (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 212.

11 *Dialectic of Enlightenment* tr. John Cunning (New York: Continuum, 1986), pp. 34, 36.

12 These and subsequent details are drawn from C. Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks* tr. Norman Cameron (New York: Grove, 1960) and John Pollard, *Seers, Shrines and Sirens* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965).

13 Nietzsche, *The Genius Figure in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, op cit.*, p. 106.

14 Quoted in Pollard, *Seers, Shrines and Sirens* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965), p. 141. Jean-Pierre Vernant uncharacteristically underplays the mythopoetic resources available in the tale of the sirens, offering a one-dimensional reading in which "The Sirens are the opposite of the Muses"—by which he means that they are exclusively disabling, luring their auditors to destruction. *Mortals and Immortals* ed. Froma Zeitlin (Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 105.

15 *The Siren's Song* ed. Gabriel Josipovici, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 62-63, and p. 61.

16 *Houseboat Days* (New York: Penguin, 1977), p. 15.

17 *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 121. "Opposite pairs such as inside/outside, the raw/the cooked, or life/death appear to be merely derivatives of the fundamental opposition between boundary and passage," in de Lauretis' view, and "all these terms are predicated on the *single* figure of the hero who crosses the boundary and penetrates the other space. In so doing the hero, the mythical subject, is constructed as human being and as male; he is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinction, the creator of differences. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter." (p. 119) de Lauretis' thesis derives from a reading of Oedipus and the Sphinx, via Freud, which leads her to overstress the binary and mistake some of its attributes. The power of metamorphosis invested in myth—Greek or otherwise—is not exclusively a male prerogative. One might with equal plausibility contend that the male *resists* (female) differences and a feminine aptitude for transformation.

18 *Gender Trouble, op cit.*, p. 146.

19 *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 44.

20 Clayton Eshleman's poetic investigations of Paleolithic imaginal stirrings constitute an ongoing investigation of hominid perturbation as creative resource. Commenting on an earlier draft of my project, he wondered whether we might regard "breath [as] an upper displacement, a mental appropriation of a conjunction that was initially involved with the lower body?" The Muse then might indicate a point of bifurcation straddling upper from lower body functions (Bakhtin), and the received account of the Heliconian Muses dictating to Hesiod specifically aligns Muse-resource with consciousness, breath-spirit-pneuma, and the propensity to sublimation which the Christian era derives so exultantly from presumed Helenic purities. To go the other way into the lower body stratum,

however, also means going back in time, to take in the Paleolithic continuum, and also to probe shamanistic traditions in general. One result, as Eshleman insightfully put it, is to see that "A muse is also a bagpipe, a musette, probably related to muzzle, or animal mouth. . ." (personal communication, November 21, 1993). Redgrove and Shuttle cite the ancient injunction that, "'in order to enter the temple precincts one has to be transformed into an animal,'" and they link this motif to the catabasis tradition of subterranean descent—specifically the Homeric *nekyia* involving a blood ritual they associate with menstruation. *(The Wise Wound, op cit.,* pp. 313-314)

21 *Lyric Philosophy* (University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 230. The view of culture as a progressive "rescue" of stability from a preordained biological instability—a deprivation of instinct, an eccentric positionality, etc.—is advanced by various German philosophers of anthropology. See Helmuth Plesser, *Die Stufen des Organismus und der Mensch;* Arnold Gehlen, *Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter,* and works by biologists Adolf Portmann, J. von Uexküll, and P. Buytendijk.

22 *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture* tr. Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 138-139.

23 A valuable study of apotropaic masks is A. David Napier's *Masks, Transformation and Paradox* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

24 *The Pink Guitar, op cit.,* p. 36.

25 *The Origins of English Words: A Discursive dictionary of Indo-European Roots* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 129.

26 "'Venuses,' Turtles, and Other Hand-Held Cosmic Models," in Myrdene Anderson and Floyd Merrell, eds., *On Semiotic Modelling* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991), p. 57.

27 *Apocalypse and/or Metamorphosis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 193, 194.

28 "The Poet," *Essays and Lectures* (New York Library of America, 1983), p. 457.

29 *Oedipus, Philosopher* tr. Catherine Porter (Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 54.

30 As Goux points out, filiarchy defies both patriarchy and matriarchy in its disavowal of all forms of symbolic reproduction. This violent detachment from the sanctioning imperatives of the ancestors "is the driving impulse that defines Western civilization as history." (204) Oedipus, then, is the prototype of a "man who creates his own laws in a scandal of autonomy and humanism that at once opens up the possibility of an auto-institution of the social in an absolutely sovereign community *(autonomous, autodikos, autoteles)* and also allows the emergence of the individual." (203, 204)

31 I once heard Kaja Silverman describe her task (in what would become the book *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* [1992]) as "eroticizing male lack."

32 *The Pink Guitar, op cit.,* pp. 25, 37, 38.

On Reviewing Robert Duncan and Other Matters

The issues raised by Andrew Schelling's "The Tale The Hand Itself Tells" [Sulfur 34 (1994)] extend deeper into the complex of contemporary poetry than his objections to what was included in (or excluded from) Robert Duncan's *Selected Poems*. How a poem should or could appear in a book, and the relationship of contemporary poetry to commercial publishing also appear as issues. The question of the responsibilities of the reviewer comes up as well: should a reviewer have a firm understanding of the work under discussion and comment on it with precision, or should the reviewer use, exploit, a book as a forum to discuss other matters that are close to his/her attention. Both positions are practiced each day. I am using this response to spread out some information that might be helpful for readers of Duncan, or other poets for that matter.

Mr. Schelling raises the issue of whether Duncan's typescript is the final text and questions the validity of setting Duncan's poems in type. Kenneth Irby knew the facts of the situation when he reviewed Duncan's *Ground Work II: In the Dark* [*Conjunctions* 12 (1988)]. Now Andrew Schelling brings the typescript issue forward again. Duncan had a long and at times tempestuous relationship with printers and publishers. Most of his books were set in type. *Ground Work: Before the War*, however, will remain the major document in postwar American poetry of a poet preparing the text of his own poems on a typewriter for publication. The fact is that after this book Duncan changed his mind about setting his poems in type for publication.

A short review of the situation might be helpful. Duncan's early books, *Heavenly City Earthly City* and *Medieval Scenes*, were set in type by the publishers, Bern Porter and James Broughton, as was *Poems 1948-49*, which Duncan published himself under the imprint of Berkeley Miscellany Editions. Joe Dunn and White Rabbit Press printed the first act of Duncan's play *Faust Foutu*, but when it was clear that Dunn would not be able to publish the whole play, Duncan published a typed version under his own

imprint, Enkidou Surrogate—a surrogate imprint for White Rabbit Press. Duncan's contention with publishers intensified over the publication of his book *Letters*. That volume was published in 1958 by Jonathan Williams, and remains one of the most beautiful of the publications of the Jargon Society. Claude Fredericks set the type and then printed the book. The production of the book took about two years. At the beginning Duncan and Fredericks mistook one another (Jonathan Williams rightly turned the negotiations over to the poet and the typesetter) about how the lines and spacing should appear on the page. Duncan responded to Fredericks's work with detailed "Memos" in which he set out his principles of spacing and internal margins. Toward the end of the project, on 17 January 1958, Duncan wrote to Fredericks: "Your care wins me; as we work together on these proofs it seems more and more to meet the care I have had for the making of the book in writing." It was Fredericks who suggested placing the ends of long lines in square brackets at the right margin instead of bringing them back to the left margin and indenting them. The use of square brackets also appears in *Selected Poems* (pages 138 and 139, for examples). His first *Selected Poems* published by City Lights Books in 1959 also caused Duncan consternation. The publisher, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, held to a rigid page count, which irked Duncan no end; but it was the stapled binding which he rejected. The edition was rebound, sewn in signatures, but the page count and organization remained Ferlinghetti's.

The cover sparked the controversy about *The Opening of the Field*. Jess made the cover, which was at first rejected and then accepted as the frontispiece; Grove Press kept its cover. Duncan's following books, *The Years as Catches, Roots and Branches* and *Bending the Bow, The First Decade,* and *Derivations* were all set in type. The controversy of this period was with the publication of *A Book of Resemblances* which was to be published by Andrew Hoyem and Dave Haselwood at The Auerhahn Press. The book was first planned as a two volume set, but then an unresolved dispute about the kind of paper to be used led to the cancellation of the publication. The essential difficulties—which then come back to Mr. Schelling's views—began in 1968, when Graham Mackintosh dropped a page from the final proofs of *Bending the Bow,* leaving out a poem, "The Christ in the Olive Tree," and then renumbered the pages to cover the error. But when Saul Marks, the typesetter for John Martin's (Black Sparrow Press's) edition of *Tribunals,* confused his notations and internal spacing, Duncan retorted by insisting on a facsimile of his notebook (which is a slight misrepresentation, because the poem appears over several pages with blocks of other writing interspersed, while the reproduction makes it appear as if the poem were written straight out, page after page) and of his typescript to accompany the book. Then, too, he came to the strong position of insisting on the typescript as the "primary 'score' of the poem."

Schelling cites (and rightly) "A Preface prepared for MAPS #6; THE ISSUE" as Duncan's fullest statement of his insistence on the typescript as the definitive text of a poem. He could have cited as well Duncan's statement in *Wch Way* 4 (1982) as a response to Jed Rasula's setting of "Santa Cruz Propositions" in type:

> What the author has to insist on clearly is which one is the authentic text—in my case, not the manuscript, which is conceived of as a propositional sketch; and most certainly not the printed version, which represents the work and interpretational notation of someone else; but the present state of the typescript which comes from and is in my own working hand and Eye as concept ongoing.

That was the second part of Duncan's statement; the first is:

> Outside of answering certain questions in a telephone conversation with Jed Rasula who was to set the copy of the poem and my pointing out that in part II a series of texts are brought together, mixt together, to form a conglomerate whole and that these have, each, a separate type-face, I have not cooperated further in the presentation of the poem. My typescript is the definitive text. The test herein presented is WCH WAY's text of the poem, not mine; wherein whatever deviations from the original, including the use of justified types, the spacing after marks of punctuation, any typographical "errors," the variant articulations of elements of the poem, of lines, of sections, etc. are to be viewed as belonging to the present version, and not to the author's version as it stands. With this in mind I have in no way submitted proof-corrections to the printer.

Another line runs through Duncan's writing life. *Fragments of a Disorderd Devotion* presents the text in the poet's holograph, as does the later *A Book of Resemblances, The Cat and the Blackbird,* and *Names of People.* In *Caesar's Gate,* the poems written in 1955 while the book and the collages were in production—appear in holograph, while the poems from 1949-1950 appear in type. Duncan enjoyed making his own books, drawing them and typing them. He gave Helen Adam handmade books with crayon drawings in them. The Christmas cards he and Jess made for friends are other examples of the pleasure of making. In 1971, he began distributing typescripts of his working notes entitled "Ground Work." That series contained *Poems from the Margins of Thom Gunn's* ***Moly*** and *A Seven-*

teenth Century Suite. Duncan was physically and imaginatively engaged in the production of his own poems.

During part of his career, Duncan did not fight against having his poems appear in type. After the difficulties with *Bending the Bow* and *Tribunals*, he insisted on the authenticity of his typescript as the final text of the poem, yet during this period he also allowed into print, in type: 1) *A Song from the Structures of Rime Ringing as the Poet Paul Celan Sings:* 2) *Veil, Turbine, Cord & Bird*, 3) *Achilles' Song*, as well as the broadside 4) *Quand Le Grand Foyer* (with his watercolor drawings). During this same period, Duncan allowed the reprinting of the typewriter version of his play *Faust Foutu* in type; and the reprinting of the two versions of *Medieval Scenes* in type as well.

In the fall of 1938, in Philadelphia, Duncan took typing classes; from that time forward he earned part of his living (in various periods) typing for other people. The typewriter, as well as his own hand, were bound up in the actual process of writing, as he said part of his own "working hand and Eye." The manual typewriter was the first, best technology Duncan mastered. He later shifted to an electric typewriter, with multiple elements for Greek, accents, italics, and point sizes. Late in his life he purchased a typewriter with a small capacity memory that displayed lines in a small screen just above the keys. The sophisticated computer (at that time) that Jed Rasula used to set "Santa Cruz Propositions" at Station Hill Press was beyond Duncan's expertise. Had he retained his health and strength, I am betting he would have used a word processor and understood it as his best technology that could in fact master the proportional spacing of type (which he learned from James Peter Cooney in the early 1940s), spacing between words and lines, the notation, that was and is so central to his poetics. In another sense, consider the text of the essay "Rites of Participation," which appeared in *Caterpillar* 1 and 2 (1967/1968), and the text of "The H.D. Book," Part Two, Chapter 9, which appeared in *Chicago Review* (1979). The first example, is a typewriter version. Duncan underlines long quotations in the style of the manual typewriter, for italics, while in the latter similar quotations appear in type, in italics. Between 1938, with the beginning lessons on a manual typewriter, and purchasing an electric typewriter with interchangeable elements in the early 1970s, Duncan learned a new technology for his writing. One result was the intricate weaving of styles and font sizes and spacing in "Santa Cruz Propositions" done with changing and rechanging elements on the electric typewriter, and the second result was the same intricate weaving of styles and font sizes and spacing done with coded key strokes on a computer by another person. Duncan moved ahead with the technology that he could master himself, in the same way that he accumulated a reference library and a record collection in his house to support his reading and listening habits.

By the spring of 1987, Duncan's health had deteriorated to the point that he was incapable, physically, of typing the final manuscript that became *Ground Work II: In the Dark.* The contents of the book were fixed. He had decided that question. There are different typescripts with slightly different contents, but the one he handed over was the one he wanted published. He entrusted the manuscript to me to get into print with New Directions. The text was typed into a computer, and the type set from the text on disks. Peter Glassgold of New Directions and I worked with the typesetter for months to match the spacing and the notation in Duncan's typescript. During that period the title was added from the poem "After a Long Illness": "the two titles/ 'Before the War,' and now, 'In the Dark'/ underwrite the grand design." On 27 December 1987 I gave Duncan one copy—the available copy at that point. Two days later he gave it back to me along with a copy of the typescript in an envelope. He had checked the text against his typescript and pronounced the typesetting a success.

Now the question becomes: does literary history hold Duncan bound to a position of the typescript as the only authentic text, or does literary history grant him the privilege of changing his mind about set type when he examined what was possible with computer-based typesetting. Or, will the question of Duncan's deteriorating health always challenge his decision: 1) to allow the book to be set in type, and 2); to say that he approved of the results. In another sense, early in his career, and later too, even to *Bending the Bow,* Duncan had his books set in type. He then encountered great difficulties with printers, and articulated a strenuous position in favor of the typescript. He changed his mind more than once in his writing career—why then should he be challenged for changing his mind again? Duncan approved of type: why should he then be challenged for changing his mind when he acknowledged that a new technology emerged that could overcome his objections to set type? This line of argument, of course, is vastly different from Duncan's view that his typescript, made with his effort and his imagination working together, is the definitive text. That position remains an active part of Duncan's poetics. But the question of how his work would appear in publication is another question. What, Mr. Schelling, would be the difference between a text prepared on an electric typewriter in Courier 12 (used for *Ground Work: Before the War)* and one printed out on a laser printer in Courier 12 from a computer file? The latter, of course, would have sharper and unbroken characters, but the spacing and the notation would be the same. The translation to type holds imbedded codes and produces the same text.

And now to return to the issue of a "Selected Poems." A "Selected Poems," by its title and definition is a "selection" from a body of work, not a "Collected Poems." The task, or least one of them, is to include poems that represent the spread of a poet's accomplishments, the line of his/her

vision of a poet, the points of most intense attraction over a period of writing. Every person I sent proposed contents lists had special reactions: "this poem *MUST* be included," and the like. There were disagreements about this poem or that poem, but genuine agreement about the design of the volume. Gerrit Lansing was particularly helpful; he knows Duncan's writing from beginning to end. But the issue, first off, is the representation of Duncan's writing life. The initial consideration is not whether books are in or out of print, but finding the texts from the whole body of work that presents the poets work accurately. Having "An African Elegy" in the volume would have been terrific, but it was out of place. [There is an article, by the way, on the controversy of its rejection by John Crow Ransom: Kevin Ray, "Obvious Advertisement: Robert Duncan and *The Kenyon Review, Fiction International,* no. 22 (1992): 286-291.]

Leaving out "The Venice Poem" or including it was more problematic within the design of the book. "Medieval Scenes" is a serial poem from 1947 in which Duncan developed the structure of *The Opening of the Field,* as a whole book, and also the two series "The Structure of Rime" and "Passages." *Selected Poems*'s design tried to map out the development of serial form, and how that form was capable of containing Duncan's views of the poetics of form grounded in a household, and then extending through an imaginary geography to the "grand collage" he discusses in the "Introduction" to *Bending the Bow.*

"The Venice Poem" is a poem designed as "Symphonic Form," or more specifically, sonata form in three movements—exposition, development, recapitulation. The model for the poem was Stravinsky's *Symphony in Three Movements,* and like its model, the poem has a bridge between the second and third movements. There is a "Coda," after the manner of Beethoven's *Third Symphony.* Duncan did not use this form for a long poem in his subsequent poems. There are smaller examples in "A Poem Beginning With a Line by Pindar," but there is no full exposition of the form after "The Venice poem." The poem is also dense with private references, for example: "the bronze boy burns the blue of sky" refers to Landis Everson, the "Doge" is the figure of Jack Spicer, and the whole poem is based on the emotional trauma of a fractured love affair. Then: the poem takes 31 pages in *The First Decade,* and taking up that many pages would have eliminated 31 pages of poems which supported the design of the volume. I chose not to include the poem. The comfort in this unsettling decision is that the poem will appear in volume one of "Collected Poems"—along with all of Duncan's poems which were published in books. [See Andrew Schelling's perceptive article on "The Venice Poem," and Duncan's "empire" of poetry: "Of Maps, Castelli, Warplanes, & Divers Other Things that Come 'Before the War'," *Jimmy & Lucy's House of K,* 3 (January 1985): 40-51.)]

Duncan's *Selected Poems* is a book published by a commercial press, which means that the rules of commerce and finance must be followed. New Directions has a long history of publishing poetry. It is a house friendly to poets and books of poetry, and has been since 1938. The number of pages and the size of the page were determined by the publisher. The width of the page is greater than in *Bending the Bow,* a concession granted by New Directions to accommodate the long lines of the *Ground Work* volumes, once we decided to use the convention of square brackets at the right margin mentioned above. The intention was to make Duncan's work available within a single volume, on the supposition that readers would then return to individual volumes which are still in print. *Selected Poems* was published in England by Carcanet Press. At this writing, New Directions is planning a second printing. Sales of Duncan's other volumes are up from a year ago.

Mr. Schelling, apparently, was not aware of Duncan's publishing history. The issue of a typescript and the capabilities of a computer will be debated for years to come. At least the facts are now on the table. That Mr. Schelling is as unknowing about Duncan's project with printers over the years as he is about the facts of the printing of *Ground Work II: In The Dark* is understandable. I am sure, however, that Mr. Schelling was aware that he was referring to Duncan's poem "The Song of the Borderguard" when he writes: "I write as a guardian, and because I think a growl of angry betrayal's in order with this book." Duncan wrote the poem in December of 1950, very soon after he and Jess decided to live together. The image of the lion and the lover runs right through Duncan's poems—the image of the lion is stamped on the cover of *A Book of Resemblances,* for example. The head of the puma in the foreground of Jess's collage *A Western Prospect of Egg and Dart* (1988), an homage to Duncan, carries the image forward to the year of Duncan's death. The presumption of entering that love poem and then turning out anger, however, is not understandable.

—ROBERT J. BERTHOLF

War Babies, Depression, Glutted Markets, and Being Being

1)

> It seems that "the war babies," those born after 1937-38 were "Born Dead"—to use a motto favored by the Hell's Angels. The philosophism of "reality" ended some time after the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the ovens cooled down. Cinematic "appearance" took over completely sometime in the late '50s. "Nature" falls into an infinite series of movie "stills"—we get what Marshall McLuhan calls "The Reel World."
>
> —Robert Smithson

Thereafter—Smithson was writing in 1968—unreality became increasingly the reality. Movies and hallucinogenic drugs gave way to entire industries devoted to hallucinating a world. The virtualities began to produce virtualities.

In the '70s, everyone was so whacked-out that we may have failed to notice the most recent Great Depression. In the 1920s Nicholas Kondratiev showed that there is a fifty-five year cycle in capitalist economies from Depression to Depression. Although certain adjustments for wars are necessary, there should have been an economic collapse in the early '70s. The economic doomsday books which have been popular since about that time (the perennial bestselling "How to Survive the Forthcoming Collapse," etc.) are based on some version of Kondratiev's long-wave theory.

In *Strategic Cycle Investing,* however, Richard Coghlan demonstrates, with fairly cogent numbers, that in fact the world economy was in Depression from 1973-1983 and that it was not recognized. The expected symptoms did not appear. Rather than investors with long margins accounts diving from skyscrapers and heavy working-class unemployment, the symptoms of this depression were high inflation and the widespread decline of actual income; underemployment replaced unemployment. People were in fact taking the beating that emotionally they felt, but shrewd monetary policy (for which Jimmy Carter was despised) smoothed out the cycle and misplaced the disaster. We are still, I think, wondering what hit us.

If 1973, the year of Smithson's death, was 1929, it explains a lot. The arts took on a strong proletarian tinge, but the new proletariat was not factory workers and displaced farmers but displaced information workers. And, of course, the NEA might be seen as something like the WPA Writer's

and Artist's Projects. During the previous Great Depression the arts suffered from lack of technique: every one knew what to say, no one knew how to say it (or were careless in the urgency to get the message out); in the '70s there was plenty of technique, everyone was befuddled. The primary recourse was simplistic theories: Marxism, linguistic nihilism, and so froth (let the typo stand). The arts tended to become varieties of pointless data processing, the shuffling about of empty forms and playful applications of alternative hermeneutic techniques.

The paintings of Mark Tansey (currently in a major show at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts) document both the grandiosity of means and triviality of intent. They are jokes, and as cartoons they would be funny. As monumental paintings they are vaguely obscene.*

2)

As far as I can tell, none of the arts in their old forms have survived. In recent months I have noticed two claims to date the death of American poetry in 1971 and, if I recall correctly, 1974 or perhaps '76 (but the bicentennial year seems excessively neat). Another poet told me that he and a friend had spent much time in the '80s trying to map American poetry and were convinced that there had been a major environmental disaster—a kind of meltdown of poetry's reactor—that they tried to locate.

In her Introduction to *The Scarlet Cabinet* Alice Notley writes:

> There is too much of human material now everywhere: the world is covered with "the man-made." None of our problems can be solved by making more of it, more of the material, including books. Shiny-covered, same-looking books everywhere. To go into a bookstore & be made sick by all the books there, is almost the same as to be made sick by all the dead cars in New Jersey, seen from the train window, early in the morning. All achievement, writerly & poetic achievement included, must become more invisible.

*From Judi Freeman's catalog for the show *(Mark Tansey,* San Francisco, 1993): "Constructing the Grand Canyon is perhaps the consummate metaphor for the process of investigation in 'a world as text,' as Tansey characterizes it. Derrida, de Man, Bloom, and Hartman, clustered near the center of the painting, appear with the poststructuralist Michel Foucault, seated on a block near the painting's left edge. They are present at the building of the Grand Canyon, surrounded by those who chisel, hoist, jackhammer, measure, shovel, blast, carve, inscribe. Why? After all, the Grand Canyon is a natural monument created more than 1.5 billion years ago. These 'workers' seek to master its 'meaning.' The sheared, folded, and blurred cliffs of text are unclear; words give texture to these cleaved chunks of earth. Man is dwarfed by these massive forms."

If recovery from the Great Depression of the '30s left us with the heritage of World War II and the permanent support of the War Machine, the Great Depression of the '70s left us with a material world so depleted that we could only produce information. As we produced war materials in quantities to destroy the earth several times over, in order to pump up the economy, we now produce information many-times in excess of what we can process.

> Notley goes on to say, "Poetry. . .could be a force for the reestablishment of the invisible, for making people's inner lives more important than this constant assertion of substance. For poetry is not about words, or how one thinks, or making things. It is about essence—the secret inside the material.

This, it seems to me, is as clear a statement of the problem as one is likely to find. I can see no solution which does not involve a profound change in both the prevalent poetics and the existing institutions of poetry. The catechism of twentieth-century American poetry begins

What should I most fear?

"Go in fear of abstraction."

Essence, however, is not merely abstract, it is the abstraction of abstraction, so secret that it may not be nameable at all. A poetry of essences requires not "a little machine made out of words" (WCW) but a making of concepts which renew our sense of the inner vitality of things. It is not a call to add new things to nature, but to make up nature, with utter disregard for the false material nature with which we are presented.

3)

Charles Stein's *The Hat Rack Tree: Selected Poems from theforestforthe-trees,* 1980-1990s* is an important book for what it reveals about both a poetry of essence and the changes in the poetic institutions that are required to accommodate it.

Although he is not represented in any of the new canon-making anthologies, Stein is one of the foremost war-baby poets. His work from the late 1960s through 1976 was well published: *Provisional Measures, The Virgo Poem, Poems and Glyphs, Witch Hazel, Parts and Other Parts,* and *Horse Sacrifice* collect work that he wrote by the age of thirty-two. *The Hat Rack Tree* is the only substantial, subsequent collection of poetry.**

*Station Hill Press, Barrytown, NY 12507, $9.95.

**I suspect many readers of this volume will want to seek out a smaller selection, *A Night of Thought* (St. Lazaire Press, 1988).

In an introductory note, Stein writes:

> theforestforthetrees is a textual practice, not a single long poem. This project has included all the writing in "poetry" I have done since the early '80s. To date it amounts to several shelves of folders, binders, and notebooks. I write freely and compose from this work pieces and compilations of pieces when occasions for publication arise. I hope the name suggests that the whole of it cannot be surveyed but exists solely for the sake of the particular moments of writing it affords and for the particular compilations. Yet each poem or collection does emerge from a "forest" of writing activities that in some way informs them all.

I have had the good fortune to be conducted through much of *theforest* as it has been produced by the poet himself. If it is a textual practice for him, it has been a listening practice for me. At my house or his and in numerous diners in the mid-Hudson Valley, I have heard much of *theforest* read aloud.

The Hat Rack Tree is an essence of *theforest*. Although I have seen the shelves of notebooks many times, I hesitate to guess how many pages there are, and I do not know if Stein could give more than a rough estimate, but I doubt that the one-hundred-and-twenty pages in this volume represent much more than one to two percent of the total. Any selection and publication is metonymic abstraction.

In *theforest* are beautifully articulated longer poems of the kind that are collected in this volume, and there are regions, more or less fragmentary, more or less well mapped, relating to the various matters of Stein's concern— Dzogchen meditation, phenomenological investigations, mathematical theory, dream work, and Greek poetry, especially the fragments of the poet-philosopher Parmenides—all crisscrossed with forest paths of often comic everydayness, all held together by an ear absolutely confident of the movement of speech, the resonance of vowels, the liquidity of certain consonance and phrase-marking stops of others.

This volume is not "the best of" *theforest*. He might have made selections which would have included none of these poems which would have been as impressive. A more daring selection might have collaged more fragmentary material; a more difficult selection, which would be of great interest to a small audience, would have drawn more on the mathematical speculations. From the various Xeroxed manuscripts that Stein has given me over the years, I might have made a volume that I would have liked better or that would have been as "good," or that I like better now because of its relevance to my own current work and interests.

4)

I should mention too that at the edges of *theforest* poetry gives way to other activities: performance poetry and improvised music, photography, installation art, pen and ink drawing, and philosophical writing. These are all equally part of the investigation.

What is the investigation? In a recent essay Stein provides this extraordinary commentary:

> As I wish to have an identity at last—or to be at last liberated from the need to have one—the concern for identity transmutes into soteriology: I wish to be saved by what I really am from what I am only apparently, or to be free at last from the very need to Be. This last wish is not suicidal: I do not want to be free from existence but from being insofar as it implies determinate identity—to be some-one or -thing, to show the mark of a nature, category, or type.
>
> The ultimate identity-pure, Parmenidean, Unique Being—is guaranteed to "all that is" but absolutely denied to everything that has "identity"—all seeming things that only are what they are by virtue of not being something else. Such beings are pseudo-beings. They exist by "being-not," and, through this pseudo-identity, they suppress their inalienable but ineffable communion with Being as such.
>
> Under this austere mythology of Being, when I seek to satisfy my yearning "to be at last" by acceding to determinate identity, I lose, by the measure of my own success, my one chance at satisfaction. I confess that this is a mythology that turns my head. It stops me in my mental tracks as I pursue ordinary identity-achieving activities and sends me looking instead for that in my own seeking, which, already conversant with Being, in the course of daily things, passes itself by.*

The question of the being of being, this essence which is so deep that even its essentiality is in some sense denied, pervades Stein's work. His

*"Modalities of Identity," *The Little Magazine*, 20, 1994. This issue of *The Little Magazine* also includes work by Anne Tardos, Will Alexander, Anne Waldman, the Awopbopalobop Groupuscle, and many others, as well as an important interview with Bob Grenier. It is available from *The Little Magazine*, The Department of English, State University of New York at Albany, Albany, NY 12222, $7.

identity is not as poet, performer, musician, photographer, visual artist.. These modes of identity are like Wittgenstein's ladder which must be thrown away after it has been climbed.

I am taken
for the power
I desire

(people think I am *real*

I am not real.

I stand on the roof.

I vanish.

I see
the sleeves
of my selves
grow dim on the plane.

This poetry is far more difficult than it first appears. A careful reading of *The Hat Rack Tree* will reveal that the nuances are not just stylistic graces, but the registrations of a poet with a sense of timing so perfect that he can reveal the comic and the sublime in the same effortless move:

elephants freely choosing
their future orbits

a curious feature of the physical world
that there are no features
that there is no
world. . .

The reason that abstraction got a bad name is that something seems to be left out. There was a confusion of abstraction and generalization. There are abundant reasons to "Go in fear of generality"—the faceless, empty categories of the sludgy sociology in which we now drown. Abstraction involves laying out a field, withdrawing to view the field in its extent, and

reentering the field, having replaced the materiality with concrete awareness, the visible with the invisible, the product with the essence. Abstraction is not generalization: it gives you a way to tell the dancer from the dance, but it does not prevent you from being the dancer and being the dance; it gives you a way to tell the dancer and the dance from the moon and the stars, but it does not prevent you from being the dancer and the dance and the moon and the stars. Awareness itself is abstraction and abstraction of abstraction.

Charles Sanders Pierce imagines a consciousness so reduced that its sole datum is the smell of rotting cabbage. This is either already an abstraction from a material world and a material sensorium or the consciousness is constructing its experience whole cloth, an experience without concrete grounds whatsoever.

5)

The earliest of these poems were written when Stein was about thirty-five *(Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita,* etc.). In this year of the book's publication, he turns fifty. The first poem in the collection (which incidentally first appeared in *Sulfur)* is an elegy for Lou Kleinsmith, Stein's first T'ai Chi Chuan teacher. The death of the teacher is the beginning of maturity:

> the bones become language itself
> unanimously arching over humanity
> taking all of us up in its colossal superstructure
> confounding our being in its intricate hypotaxis
> floating up ominously
> it is impossible to tell just what keeps it afloat
> lifting each in its levity
> the strange sun setting in the west beyond the water
> rises
> because we approach it at such speed
> it is a lion
> and it opens its fiery mouth
> a black dot growing huge at the center of the sun
> inhaling the fumes of whales
> on the isle below
> safe
> for a stay
>
> we are deposited

Language is that essence that motivates movement without "internal combustion," as Charles Olson says in his essay on Shakespeare's late plays. Confronted with those things that move of their own nature, "without using any means or matter other than those local and implicit to it. . . . We are in the presence of the only truth which the real can have, its own undisclosed because not apparent character. Get that out with no exterior means or materials, no mechanics except those hidden in the thing itself, and we are in the hands of the mystery."

Stein cannot be identified as a teacher any more fundamentally than he can be identified with various other modes of identity in which he participates, but it seems to me that the activity of his poetry is teaching.

Although the idea arouses immediate suspicion and even ire, something of this order, that *poetry is teaching*, is what Alice Notley is calling for. It is not didacticism, not the enforcement of the norms that we learned to despise in grade school, not the benumbing dictation of things which must be remembered for the exam. True teachers never tell you any thing, not because they are perverse, but because the first thing a teacher must know is that it is not possible to *tell* any one any thing.

Information is not passed from a producer to a consumer. Food, cars, and lumber are important products because people *consume* them. People, however, produce the information they need, and indeed production is their only viable access to information.* They do not read books, they stare at the pages until they write it, and of course they write different books (because they are different people), and then they have arguments over interpretation. The arguments can only be resolved when they understand that they read (wrote) different books.

Granted, they are likely to write a better book, if they stare at a better book. To this extent information is passed.

Communities nonetheless are possible not because information is passed around, and everyone, as it were, buys in, but because humans, if they can at least partially overcome their self-alienation, realize that they are the same kinds of beings. It is the function of teachers to help us realize this, and it is a much harder point to get across that it seems that it should be: "the bones become language itself/ unanimously arching over humanity." It takes patience, practice.

We watch the teachers do it. They smile, encourage. Let us know that we still don't have it. The problem is that trying to become them, which is precisely what we do not want to do, is the only way we have to become

* Both the educational and the entertainment industries are based on the premise of information consumption, and people often try desperately to provide the kinds of inputs which are required. They so completely lose contact with their own essence that they begin to think it would be good to be a computer.

ourselves. We look for that in our own seeking, which, "already conversant with Being, in the course of daily things, passes itself by."

The function of the teacher is not to think all of the thoughts, know all of the facts, have the right interpretations, and impart them to the student. The teacher's task is the same as the student's: both must realize their own *essential* information. This is a vast, ever-consuming undertaking. Teachers are those extraordinary people who have enough surplus energy to help others along. They remind the students of possibilities that they might otherwise fail to explore by displaying interesting and attractive objects that they have produced in the process of the paradoxical task of identifying their unidentity. They do what they do. If they talk too much, explain too much, they become distractions both to their students and to themselves.

6)

The modernist artist (and this idea can be traced back at least to Sir Philip Sidney) adds a new thing to nature, an original; thus the artist is distinguished from the artisan or engineer who makes only a copy. The postmodern artist gives up the possibility of creating an original and focuses on making a revealing or attractive copy. Both are of course theories of production.

There is much phony, illegitimate product. No doubt, there will soon be computer programs which turn out passable work in most fields. Already there are programs which algorithmically produce music as engaging as the run-of-the-mill graduate student in composition (they are using the same algorithms and the computer is more exacting in the process).

But I do not doubt that completely legitimate production of art is unlimited. It is possible to produce more serious, engaging, complex, and exciting work that any one can responsibly engage.

The other side of modernist aesthetics, the self-contradiction which made modernism the powerful stance that it was, has been lost. Pound:

Dichten = condensare

> . . .'Dichten' is the German verb corresponding to the noun 'Dichtung' meaning poetry, and the lexicographer has rendered it by the Italian verb meaning 'to condense.'

One condenses by two methods: omit redundancy, raise the whole to a higher degree of awareness (i.e. abstraction). *The Hat Rack Tree* provides a standard for condensation.

7)

If, however, "All achievement, writerly & poetic achievement included,. . .must become more invisible," the real achievements are likely to be lost altogether.

During the heyday of the NEA Ed Sanders proposed—quite usefully, I thought—that there be grants for not producing poetry, as there were grants for tobacco farmers not growing tobacco. But the funding has been heavily reduced, and the problem remains.

It is not entirely a problem of quantity, and it is not exactly a problem of quality. Many of the *best* poets are publishing, as it were, the raw data from their research. The pure aesthetic flow. I do not deny that it is ever engaging, rich, and significant, but somehow it is necessary to push it all up to the next level, to make the next step toward invisibility.

Although the three new anthologies of contemporary poetry edited by Weinberger, Messerli, and Hoover all explicitly recognize Donald Allen's *The New American Poetry* as their antecedent, they all fail precisely on the point which made the Allen anthology invaluable. The contemporary anthologies are slightly different readings of the poetry market, each with its clearly marked and useful stance. One of the most important criterion of inclusion, especially for poets in mid-career, however, is extensive, *recent* publication. By contrast, Allen located and published poets who had published almost nothing. I do not necessarily mean this as criticism, only as evidence of the way the institutions are presently working. If poetic achievement must become more invisible, and it seems to me that it must, it is necessary for the guardians of poetic achievement to keep their eyes peeled.

—DON BYRD

Stephen Fredman *The Grounding of American Poetry: Charles Olson and the Emersonian Tradition* (Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture) 1993.

Do we need academic literary criticism? I admit that I was inspired as a youth by the idea of the literary critic hero, exemplified by F.R. Leavis taking on the Cambridge English Department single-handed. But then when I read Leavis praising "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" for being something I doubt that it is, and then dumping on the *Cantos* as though the person called Ezra Pound had suddenly become incompetent, I found no hero but feet of clay. I realized that literary criticism is not made up of truths, but of mere opinions. I remember A. Alvarez, discovering that I was writing on D.H. Lawrence, saying to me: "D.H. Lawrence can't be taken seriously as a novelist. Six of his short stories are interesting." That's what I call mere opinion. So when Douglas Bush at a Harvard podium in the early fifties called for a ten year moratorium on all critical articles I cheered along with the rest. No one could stop the flood; but we do have a right to ask, of even the best of literary criticism, whether or not we need it, need it at all.

Especially when the general level of literary criticism has sunk somewhere below "mere opinion." At least the older critics had a sense of what they thought should be read, and why; they upheld their notion of taste. Nowadays, as a genre of the plastic arts, literary criticism, exercising its own kind of aesthetics, sees patterns of connections within a work or a body of work, and expresses those patterns in a quasi-persuasive language created to achieve supremacy for that particular aesthetic formulation. In a word, it molds the plasticine of literature for its own artistic ends. Northrup Frye was the first, in my experience, to make a mandala of the whole of literature. *Anatomy of Criticism* is in its own way sublime. But anatomy—the title gives it away—is performed on dead creatures. Frye cannot be accused of vivisection. He might be accused of deadening literature in order to dissect it into his categories.

Up to 1963 I was nagged by this belief that a scholar was a puny guy compared with a real man, a literary critic, a Leslie Fiedler, say. I had never wanted to throw my weight around in opinionated articles: but I worried that I should. Then Olson appeared on the scene—this was in Buffalo—and he raised me up. The scholar and the poet are true friends; literary criticism is a predator on both. It had always been a joy to have a class of interested students and a text in front of us—a text to be explicated in terms of what the poet knew, in terms of how it came to be written, and in terms of how it would be understood by its intended audience—that great secret

joy of being a practising scholar. And not only did Olson, as a scholar himself, confirm the rightness of being that kind of teacher, but he gave me a text that I could be devoted to through endless classroom explications. Because that's all that scholarship is—a demonstration of devotion. If literary criticism at its best, busies itself to say what should be studied, and why, scholarship just does it. Scholarship gives everything to the literary work; literary criticism, especially of the newer sort, takes it away: the process of analysis deflects the spotlight back on itself, willy nilly.

Take *The Grounding of American Poetry* for example. We are talking here about the very best sort of recent literary criticism. Stephen Fredman is well-read, a clear thinker and writer, and has chosen a good subject. But what is it worth to compare Olson and Thoreau? (Note that the subtitle of the book, "Charles Olson and the Emersonian Tradition" is somewhat misleading. Fredman actually links Olson and Thoreau; it's Robert Duncan who is linked to Emerson.) Take a sentence like the following:

> For all his agreement with Thoreau on the virtues of mental continence, Olson does not countenance Thoreau's somewhat morbid distrust of flesh. . .(p. 42).

This is a good example of crit-speak. As a matter of fact, Olson says nothing about Thoreau in all the letters and talks and essays that exist. The "agreement" above, and refusal to "countenance," are Fredman's imaginings. He must know what he is doing here, having already squared with the reader: "Charles Olson never described Thoreau as a significant precursor." But he persists in the opinion that "their approaches to the question of groundlessness are in certain respects remarkably similar" (p. 26). The bare fact is that neither Olson nor Thoreau has "an approach" to the "question" of "groundlessness." This formulation is out of Fredman's aesthetic. It's what *he* sees happening; it's *his* construction on things. And thus the quite dissimilar Olson and Thoreau get lost in this quasi-argument for their common ground.

Fredman actually raises himself the doubts about this methodology, by quoting a pertinent passage from Olson's "Human Universe" on p. 63:

> All that comparison ever does is set up a series of reference points: to compare is to take one thing and try to understand it by marking its similarities to or differences from another thing. . .such an analysis only accomplishes a *description*, does not come to grips with what really matters: that a thing, any thing, impinges on us by a more important fact, its self-existence, without reference to any other thing, in short, the

> very character of it which calls our attention to it, which wants us to know more about it, its particularity.

Fredman is aware that literary criticism is challenged by the above quotation, for he asks, seriously, what kind of meaning there *can* be "without comparison, description, classification" (p. 63). He then tries to enter fully Olson's answer to the question, exploring in particular Olson's ultimate answer to what contains meaning, "The Secret of the Black Chrysanthemum." In a section on pp. 63-68 Fredman performs an admirable explication.

But the illumination thereby achieved does not prevent him from going on plying his trade with further comparison and classification, giving, for instance, credence to that cliched act of classification, the Black Mountain school of poets, referring to "the Black Mountaineers" (p. 71) and "the Black Mountain poets" (p. 83), with several other like references. When I was leaving Buffalo for Simon Fraser in 1965 I sketched for Olson a plan to create in my new university a center for Black Mountain studies. I indulged that urge to slice up literature into manageable units. At the end of what I thought a brilliant and convincing exercise in literary genre-brokering, Olson let me pause, and then said: "You'd be better off sticking with me!" Like many others, I have had the experience of Olson speaking intuitively, directly, and accurately to one's better nature.

In spite of everything I have said above, I truly welcome Fredman's book. It is excellent of its kind, and the answer to my initial question is, Yes, we do need books of this kind. Olson in particular does. A poet's reputation, like it or not, depends on literary critics. In our time, the reputation that critics can give a poet—just by paying a lot of attention to his work, no matter how—makes the difference between whether the poet is read or not. Fredman will help Olson get read.

—RALPH MAUD

Noticings

Jenny Penberthy's meticulously edited *Niedecker and the Correspondence with Zukofsky 1931-1970* (Cambridge, 1993) is a much more important book than its title would suggest and a wonderful example of how a

resourceful scholar can turn what seems to be the most disabling of circumstances to her distinct advantage. I am referring to Paul Zukofsky's refusal to grant Penberthy permission, not only to print his father's letters but even to quote from them. A lesser critic might have given up, but Penberthy solved the problem by prefacing the actual forty-year correspondence (Niedecker's side only) with a 118-page biographical, critical, and bibliographical essay which tells the story of the relationship between this most unlikely of couples—the plain, unworldly and unknown Protestant woman poet who lives in isolation on Black Hawk Island in Wisconsin, and the sophisticated, Jewish New Yorker, who, while not yet a well-known poet either, has visited and corresponded with Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams.

Penberthy's narrative, substituting as it must for the missing side of the correspondence, makes the absent Louis Zukofsky all the more present. She neither moralizes nor psychologizes, letting events, letters, and poems speak for themselves. The tale that emerges (the tale Paul Zukofsky is at such pains to repress) is not pretty—at least not so far as Zukofsky is concerned. Niedecker first came across his work in the Objectivist number of *Poetry*(1931), took courage, and wrote him a fan letter. He was evidently flattered and responded: a period of what Penberthy calls "avid communication" followed. In late 1933 Niedecker went to New York to meet her idol and for the next three years, visited him regularly. "They shared cramped quarters," Penberthy reports, "and an emotional life that was far from uncomplicated." One complication, evidently, was an unwanted pregnancy, followed by abortion. By 1936, they had decided to be "just good friends," and "by mutual agreement, they destroyed all but three small fragments of her side of their 1930s correspondence—no doubt, a tinderbox of emotions." After Louis's marriage to Celia in 1939 and the birth of Paul in 1943, their friendship became more exclusively literary, although Niedecker tried in awkward and touching ways to be a part of Zukofsky family life. "The correspondence," Penberthy observes, "was Niedecker's emotional and artistic lifeline." But on Zukofsky's side, it was evidently much less: in the course of time, he became increasingly grudging and remote, as well as slightly paranoid about her "use" of his work. Thus, when he would cite a line he intended to use in a poem—as in a 1951 letter where he quotes "if love exists why remember it?" to be used in *"A"*-12—he cautioned Niedecker not to use it first. Again, when he relayed some of Paul's childhood remarks, he reminded Niedecker that this material was his property and that she mustn't use it. And in the mid-sixties, when she wanted to publish a book of his letters on poetry—a project that was originally his own idea—he balked and finally refused permission for her to publish it. In an unusually candid letter to Jonathan Williams in 1965, Niedecker writes, "It has been difficult for thirty years, Jonathan, yet I

suppose he has been—the association thru literature—the most valuable part of my life. I can do nothing but respect him now, black tho things seem." In "Wintergreen Ridge" (completed in 1967), her pain is more vividly expressed:

and in this to us peace
the stabbing
pen
friend did it
close to the heart
pierced the woods
red
(autumn?)

Niedecker died three years later. Zukofsky's name is notably missing from Jonathan Williams's *Epitaphs for Lorine*, which includes tributes from thirty-two poets, among them Cid Corman, Basil Bunting, Ian Hamilton Finley, Jonathan Williams, Charles Reznikoff, and George Oppen.

The letters themselves, containing as they do marvelous extracts from Niedecker's poems, pithy statements of her poetic, and references to every stage of Zukofsky's writing process, make for totally absorbing reading. Absorbing but also, to my mind, disturbing. Niedecker never complains. She tries to be cheerful, positive, optimistic. But the letters also suggest that Zukofsky's treatment of her became increasingly callous, if not cruel. His critics (most of them men) have thus far had little to say about this side of his character. In any case, his *absence* as a voice in Penberthy's book makes him all the more present—a chilling Hawthornian or Jamesian ghostly father haunting her writing. Still, it is Niedecker who finally triumphs, not only over her mentor but over his wife Celia, who is a second presence in the letters—a silent, disapproving presence who clearly resents Lorine's overtures to young Paul. For, despite her own sense of discipleship, Niedecker's poetry, generous extracts from it cited in Penberthy's texts and in the letters, was very much her own.

In the late fifties, Niedecker wrote a large number of haikus. "Haiku," Penberthy explains, "found a ready ear in Niedecker, an ear attuned to natural themes, brevity, quiet, compressed image, and unspilled emotions . . . . All her haiku-like poems are written in five-line stanzas with end-rhymes in the third and fourth lines. . . . Like their haiku models, her five-liners are sparsely punctuated." Such reference to "models" is called into question in another new scholarly book, Wai-lim Yip's *Diffusion of Distances: Dialogues between Chinese and Western Poetics* (California, 1994). Yip writes in part out of anger and frustration—frustration at what he takes to be the wholesale misunderstanding of Eastern poetry on the

part of well-meaning Westerners. "Despite a good deal of earnest protest about cultural exchange, ethnocentrism (open or subterranean) remains stubbornly entrenched in Western academia," he declares in his Prologue. "It is a question of whether the indigenous aesthetic horizon is allowed to represent itself *as it is* and *not as it is framed* within the hermeneutical habits and the poetic economy of the West."

Yip, probably known to *Sulfur* readers for his *Ezra Pound's "Cathay"* (1969), is rightly incensed by the "formidable distortions of the Chinese indigenous aesthetic horizon in treacherous modes of representation." The West, he feels, applies "one master narrative" to judge both Western and Eastern poetries, as if they were the same. "It holds," for example, "that the Tao (Way) of the Taoists can be rendered as (the Christian) God or as (the Platonic) Logos!" A language of "rigid syntactical rules" like English "can never approximate a mode of presentation whose success depends on freedom from syntax"—Chinese being a prime example. The Chinese characters, Yip shows with excellent examples, are equivalent to what we might call, in Marinetti's terminology, "words-in-freedom," although Marinetti did not have the particular "freedom" of Chinese in mind. That is to say a noun catalog like "Phoenix gone, terrace empty, river flows on alone," cannot be rationalized in such English locutions as "Because the phoenix is gone, the terrace is empty. . ." and so on. Rather, "objects and events explain *themselves* by their coexisting, coextensive emergence from nature."

Yip is right to insist that there cannot be "one common aesthetic," one master narrative that governs Chinese and American poetry. But what is the solution? What about Chinese translations of American poetry, an area neglected in Yip's book, zealous as he is to show the distortions of his own language (Chinese) on the part of his adopted country? The question remains whether the "dream of a common language" can ever become a reality. Yip argues that literary models might function as overlapping circles (he even provides a diagram of how this might work), the overlap between the two signifying cultural convergence, a mutual fructifying of divergent models. But in practice, such convergence is not likely to take place. Yip's own solution is to provide an interlinear translation, the English word written below the Chinese character it renders. This makes for good scholarship, as literal and accurate as possible, but the translator, faced as s/he necessarily is toward the language of the poetic text-to-be-derived rather than toward the original, will necessarily want to do more.

The strength of Yip's argument is that it alerts us to the problematic of translation, to the recognition that, say, Ezra Pound's China is a *construction,* not the "real thing." His critique also suggests (though he doesn't mention such cases) that the "multiculturalism" of such textbooks as the Harper-Collins World Reader, which includes as many Korean and

Egyptian poems as Italian or German ones, is specious, the Korean poem presented in its pages being transformed into an American artifact that finally bears little resemblance to the original. In this sense, the fabled hegemony of the "imperialist" U.S. is still with us: English has to be the lingua franca, no matter what. Indeed, one could argue that Korean poetry, Harper-Collins style, is one more contemporary American representation, all the more insidious for claiming to reproduce the OTHER.

In any case, the Chinese ideogram, whether "authentic" or not, continues to have a decisive influence on the work of American visual poets. The young poet and book artist Kenneth Goldsmith has just produced, in collaboration with the singer Joan La Barbara, a book cum compact disc called *73 Poems* (Permanent Press, 1994). It's one of the most beautiful books I've seen in a long time, especially when one reads its texts (printed or rather drawn in black and gray graphite on parchment-colored rag paper and framed on a white page) while listening to La Barbara's unique vocalizations, of which more in a moment.

In his Preface, Geoffrey Young quite accurately calls Goldsmith a "taxonomist of the language environment." "The central optical linking device," Young explains, "is overprinting. The bold type of one page is carried over to the next page, but screened to gray, with new bold type printed over it." *73 Poems* (the title is taken from e. e. cummings but there are actually 79 poems in the sequence) is dedicated to John Cage, and Goldsmith has clearly learned from Cage's mesostic art, as well as from Fluxus artworks and Concrete Poetry, how to make the most of morphemes, words, and phrases, arranged in mathematical and aural forms that generate what Young calls a "hiphop syntax of cultural signifiers, all the while being graphically gorgeous." Here, for example, is a two-page spread, the overprint text on the left ("CLEAN NOSE / FIRE HOSE / NO BOWS /PLAIN CLOTHES / YOU DON'T NEED / A WEATHERMAN / TO KNOW WHICH / WAY THE / WIND BLOWS") becoming the "subtext" of "DEEP THROAT / RIGHT VOTE / TERRE HAUTE / BLADDER BLOAT / BILLY GOAT / CREOSOTE / DEAD MAN FLOAT / HALL & OATES / YOU OLD GOAT / QUOTE, UNQUOTE" (FIGURE 1).

The pleasure of such texts is to watch one poem play off against another and then modulate into a third, a fourth, a fifth, the crowded pages of the opening section giving way to smaller and smaller units until, halfway through the book we reach a "0IO" figure and finally a solitary "I"; then the book fans out again, picking up verbal momentum along the way.

As a verbal-visual construct, *73 Poems* is consistently elegant, witty, and original; its rhymes (e.g., "gain weight / jail bait / soul mate / hesitate / penetrate / Watergate") producing exciting visual patterns, as is the case with the "Ts" in this particular example on P. 7. But it is its musical dimension that makes the book unique. When he finished writing the

poems, Goldsmith gave them to Joan La Barbara "to do with what she pleased." La Barbara, who had made numerous recordings with Cage, has developed an extended vocabulary of vocal sounds that range from traditional song to a wild assortment of glottal clicks and stops, inhaled notes, or overtone chant. Using tape, she also produces multiple layers of her own voice. "The first thing I had to do," La Barbara explains in a headnote, "was to differentiate between the dark and light texts. The idea of depth of field—the gray text in the background and the black text up front—required using the full stereo field, almost like an architectural space." "Musical gestures that are only half-heard," the music critic John Schaefer explains in his prefatory note, "perhaps buried under other layers of sound, may float up to the surface, only to parade off the stereo field entirely. . . . La Barbara represents Goldsmith's insistent use of certain vowels with a specific group of vocal sounds that repeat in an almost mantra-like fashion."

The result is emphatically not just another instance of setting poems to music. The zeros which occupy the central portion of Goldsmith's book, for example, are represented by layers of microtonal singing, in which, as John Schaefer explains, "the usual gap from, say, C to C-sharp is subdivided into many microtones. These notes, which are ignored by most Western music, are so close together that they give the aural illusion of one set of notes growing from another—an illusion matched by the movement of "0"s and "O"s in the text." And so *73 Poems* heralds a new direction in a poetry, planned and composed on the computer terminal, executed as a word painting, and animated by vocalization on CD. It brings the "poetry reading" into the living room (or wherever else one happens to find oneself with a CD player), making space new. An unusually happy marriage of art and technology.

—MARJORIE PERLOFF

New Poems of Emily Dickinson, ed. William H. Shurr (University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

New Poems of Emily Dickinson is a collection of nearly 500 passages excavated from the poet's correspondence, each of which the editor claims is able to stand by itself, "free from any context in the letters." These pieces

are grouped into several categories (Epigrams, New Poems, Workshop Materials, etc.), a quarter of which falls under the "New Poems" heading and poses the most problems.

Since none of ED's letters and only seven poems were published during her life, editing the handwritten manuscripts presents a myriad of structural dilemmas. But if Johnson's 1958 version of the correspondence is problematic, then this book is a typographical nightmare: the feeling one gets in reading *New Poems* is as if the past 35 years of ameliorative transcriptions have been obliterated, and one is looking at ED through a turn-of-the-century lens *a la* Todd and Higginson.

Aside from R.W. Franklin's edition of the three "Master Letters" (less than 1% of the complete correspondence), no other letters have been published in facsimile form. Shurr works exclusively off of Thomas H. Johnson's *Letters of Emily Dickinson* which was transcribed with virtually no concern for original structure. Note the alterations that occur in this excerpt of a letter from ED to "Master" as it's sieved through the editors:

I would that all I love should be weak no more. The Violets are by my side, the Robin very near, and "Spring"—they say, Who is she—going by the door—

Indeed it is God's house—and these are gates of Heaven, and to and fro, the angels go, with their sweet postillions—I wish that I were

(Johnson, *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, vol. iii, p. 333/J187. Harvard University Press, 1958)[1]

more. The Violets are
by my side—the Robin
very near—and "Spring"—
they say, Who is she—
going by the door—
*Indeed it is God's house—
and these are gates
of Heaven, and to
and fro, the angels
go, with their sweet
postillions—I wish that

(Franklin, *Master Letters of Emily Dickinson*, p. 15/F1. Amherst College Press, 1986)[2]

*Franklin's note: "Indeed] Inded *with a second* e *added in ink*"

The Violets are by my side,
the Robin very near,
and "Spring"—they say,
Who is she—
going by the door—

Indeed it is God's house—
and these are gates of Heaven,
and to and fro,
the angels go,
with their sweet postillions—

(Shurr, *New Poems of Emily Dickinson*, p. 40/S210. University of North Carolina Press, 1993)[3]

In going after his "poem," Shurr creates line-breaks and stanza-breaks, as well as altering the text by replacing dashes with commas. His sole criterion for a "Dickinson poem" is meter—the "signature" fourteener. Not only is this an insult to the complexities of ED's writing, but a naive approach to poetry in general. If we assume (as Shurr does) that ED intended these fragments to stand apart from the letters, then why didn't she format them as such? In many cases, ED sent poems on separate sheets of paper, or set off passages by indentation or spacing away from the body of the letter. Ironically, many of these "new poems" are followed in the letters by sections that were mined much earlier by Johnson when he edited the complete poems.[4]

There are several possible reasons why measured writing appears embedded in the correspondence, none of which Shurr considers: perhaps ED did not recognize a sharp distinction between her poetry and prose; perhaps she was "trial-running" nascent lines of poetry under the pretense of prose; perhaps she regarded letters as prose-formatted poems. For Shurr to have considered any of these possibilities would have weakened the book's only premise.

Among the 130 fragments in the "New Poems" section alone (roughly one-quarter of the book), 30 have one or more alterations of the text as it appears in Johnson's *Letters*, including one added word and two omitted words. Shurr cuts off or breaks into sentences 12 times in the "New Poems" section, often covering up the resulting weird grammar by installing/removing periods, capitalized letters, commas, dashes, etc.

One of the reasons such editorial hack-work can exist is that we have only Johnson's typeset versions of the letters to go by. Thus this palimpsest of editorial graffiti that bears no resemblance to what ED had written. And how we read ED's work is as dependent upon the space in and around it

(how it's seen/heard) as on the words themselves. *New Poems* is a cheap strip-mining and altering of the correspondence in order to "feed the appetite of those who would like to have more of her poems."

Perhaps *New Poems* might exasperate enough scholars and serious readers of ED to encourage the publication of a manuscript edition of the letters as has been done with the poems. Until then, editors will continue to exploit this lesser-known area of ED's work and deceive its readers. If such binary and puritanical (sacred poem / profane prose) approaches to ED's writings are done away with, broader readings of the *whole* work could open up which would in turn broaden our understanding of ED's intricacies of styles and voices—the spirit in which the words were written.

—DAN FEATHERSTON

NOTES

1 Johnson formatted the letters in standard block-print rather than following ED's line-breaks. He indicates new paragraphs by indenting three spaces. But according to Franklin, "Dickinson did not indent paragraphs, except for the one immediately after the salutation, and did not space between them." (p. 9 *Master Letters of Emily Dickinson).*

2 The asterisk indicates where, according to Franklin, a new paragraph might exist. Franklin's transcriptions follow ED's line-breaks.

3 Repeating Johnson's errors, Shurr prints commas after "side" and "near." The three versions printed here are abbreviated in order to illustrate only the variances in the texts where they overlap. See Franklin for a facsimile of the complete letter.

4 See, for example, Johnson's poem #1261 and letter #277; also poem #712-713 and letter #378 in his *Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1951) and *Letters of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958).

the dark end of the street / Margins in American Vanguard Poetry, Maria Damon, University of Minnesota Press, 1993

After a couple decades of taking it on the chin, the lyric spits out its bloody mouthpiece and turns its cheeks. Its several cheeks. No longer Sapphic nor capable of asserting an unconditional oppositional stance, the modern lyric sustains multiple subject-personae. Its subjectivity is enacted as an ongoing practice, not a fixed condition. Like poet/critic Susan Stewart, Maria Damon is in the lyric's corner. Like Cary Nelson, Damon is

interested in deconstructing the "respectable facade of American letters that would erase the indigence and illegitimacy of its vital source," a source she locates in the marginal poetics of such writers as Bob Kaufman, Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan, Gertrude Stein, a group of teenage girls living in a South Boston housing project, and. . . the Robert Lowell of "91 Revere Street."

Lowell? Why not Ted Berrigan or Bernadette Mayer, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha or Besmilr Brigham? For Damon it is less important that Lowell, like Stein, lived high on the hog, than it is that he cut himself loose in "91 Revere Street" from the hierarchy that provided him with social position and power. That he resisted in his writing an oppressive family dynamic. That he struggled with mental illness, demonstrating empathy with others by virtue of shared pain and deprivation. Despite his privilege, Damon argues, he, like the others, composed an anti-discourse that opposes the more Aristotelian and hierarchical discourse of power.

Marginal writing, and Damon is willing to consider "street-rhymes, toasts and dozens, popular music lyrics," etc., serves to creatively undermine "the philosophic and social systems that have declared it and its disenfranchised writers Other." Of her case studies, Damon's essay on Jack Spicer, his agonizingly ambivalent attitude toward the gay community and the emerging gay consciousness of the 1950s, is among the most illuminating and articulate.

Damon writes in a positional and passional prose. The energy of her investigations draws on insuppressible associations. Nietzsche, Hart Crane, Lorca, Whitman, and (most often) Genet make repeated forays into the case studies. Consequently, instead of zeroing in on an aspect of a writer's poetics, Damon is Talmudical; her focus expands concentrically. And this is a main pleasure of her book.

—FORREST GANDER

Leaking Truth: British Poetry in the '90s

Can you do no better than recite
what is heaped from old endeavor?
I would be there if language
had not split me, if salesmen
had not drawn me, self-clutching

on a pedestal imparadised, a mile
from the floor of workday seams.
It, they, set my breasts too high
and I bully you, a corner of worship
in my heart, unable to trust the lyric voice
as other than headed notepaper,
clangily portentous like the brass flock
on Assurance Hill. How I yearn,
in amnesia almost, for the landed age
which accompanies the label,
for strong-lined verses
that are more than tropes, less than gush.
—Gavin Selerie, from *Roxy* (in *10 British Poets)*

Robert van Hallberg is probably right that mainstream poetry in the U.S. can be characterized as a "suburban" poetry of accommodation and adjustment. Recently, reading over dozens of mostly little press books and magazines from the U.K., I was struck, as I have been many times before, by the tenacity and resourcefulness of so much contemporary British poetry outside the mainstream in resisting both accommodation and adjustment. —Some of these "alternative" poetries seem to desire nothing less than a new aestheticism achieved by means of a newly forming eloquence. Others of these poetries are resisting, with great energy and immense formal brilliance, the very aesthetic categories through which English poetry has traditionally been valued.

Information about the alternative directions in contemporary U.K. poetry is difficult to come by. For a number of years, I compiled a list of new U.K. poetry publications for the now discontinued Segue Distributing catalog and in this way was able to keep in touch with some of the currents in the work. On a recent trip to England I was able to pick up additional material, only to realize how much more I had missed—how much the intense cultural differences between the U.S. and the U.K. make it easy, despite shared words and formal concerns, to miss crucial social and class contexts as well as unstated assumptions. Types of class antagonisms and gender prerogatives are played out in the alternative poetry scenes in the U.K. in ways that are more marked, and dispiriting, than in the U.S. (where class and "society" values nonetheless play a crucial legitimating function for official verse culture). Certainly it is striking how many current collections and anthologies of alternative British poetry include few or virtually no women. At the same time, a particular range of aesthetic procedures seems to be propped up by a patrician decorum and Oxbridge authoritativeness that barely covers over the thematic renunciation of these values.

Indeed, the margins, in the U.K. and in the U.S., are cohabited by quite disparate (and often desperate!) factions—not only poets committed to open and new forms but also those with a tenacious commitment to an unobtainable lyric, a sort of sprung voice that takes on a religious quality at times. This may help to explain why some poets, ostensibly dedicated to alternative poetics, display a corrosive dismissiveness toward exploratory works that are radically skeptical of the rhetorical grounding of both sprung and traditional lyricism. In Britain, one senses that a struggle for the right to poetry is taking place far outside the corridors of official verse culture and, indeed, that all parties to this struggle are subject to a level of establishment abuse well beyond that experienced in the U.S. Mandarins at the margins can produce poetry that is quite poignant in its eloquent straining, but it becomes delusory when this straining achieves a monopoly on value—when the partiality of this, as any, poetic project is refused in deference to a belief in the truth of what is no more than the work's own self-imploding (or self-creating) diction. —In this context, the range and power of such poets as Maggie O'Sullivan, Tom Raworth, Allen Fisher, Denise Riley, Tom Leonard, and Bill Griffiths seems all the more remarkable and compelling.

•

The New British Poetry: 1968–88, ed. Gillian Allnutt, Fred D'Aguir, Ken Edwards, and Eric Mottram (Paladin, 1988) is the best introduction available to contemporary U.K. poetry. Mottram's section of the anthology consists of poets who began writing in what Mottram describes as "The British Poetry Revival," working in traditions related to Bunting, MacDiarmid and Jones, and includes Thomas A. Clark, Bob Cobbing, Allen Fisher, Griffiths, Lee Harwood, Barry MacSweeney, Wendy Mulford, Tom Picard, Raworth, and Iain Sinclair. D'Aguir's section focuses on "Black British Poetry" and includes explosive work in nonstandard and "dialect" forms by John Agard, Jean Binta Breeze, Valerie Bloom, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Merle Collins, and Grace Nichols among others. Allnutt's "Quote Feminist Poetry Unquote" presented works in more narrative styles by Eavan Boland, Alison Fell, Frances Horovitz, and others. Edwards's section consists of formally innovative poets born in the immediate postwar years including Richard Caddel, Cris Cheek, Ulli Freer, Glenda George, Geraldine Monk, Maggie O'Sullivan, Elaine Randell, Gavin Selerie, and Robert Sheppard.

A Various Art, ed. Andrew Crozier and Tim Longville (Carcanet, 1987) provides a fuller context for one tendency represented in the Mottram section of *The New British Poetry,* a tendency that has been particularly influential for its renovations (or refashionings) of lyrical and pastoral (or postpastoral) forms. Seventeen poets are presented, including Anthony

Barnett, John James, J.H. Prynne, Peter Riley, and Iain Sinclair, many of whom are loosely associated with "Cambridge" and most of whom began publishing in the late '60s and early '70s. The only woman in the anthology, and among the youngest contributors as far as I can tell, is Veronica Forrest-Thomson, who died in 1975 at the age of 27.

In sharp contrast, *Floating Capital: New Poets from London*, edited by Adrian Clarke and Robert Sheppard and published in the U.S. (Potes & Poets, 1991; distr. SPD, Berkeley) features the work of 14 poets, mostly younger, working in "linguistically innovative" and performative directions, with some debt to Fisher and Cobbing, who lead off the collection; the poets include Gilbert Adair, Cheek, Adrian Clarke, Kelvin Corcoran, Edwards, Virginia Firnberg, O'Sullivan, and the Australian poet Hazel Smith. *Floating Capital* is a fundamental resource for understanding British poetry in the '90s.

What follows is a brief sketch of some current work in the wake of these anthologies.

•

"I leak truth like a wound," writes Barry MacSweeney ("The Shells Her Auburn Hair Did Show") in the first issue of the welcome new Scottish magazine *Object Permanence* (1/94; #2: 5/94; 121 Menock Road, Glasgow G44 5SD). The magazine is usefully committed to including a fair number of contemporary U.S. poets in the company of the most innovative contemporary U.K. poets, allowing for the possibility of a shared cultural space that seems encouraging for all involved; even if we leak "our" truths differently on the other side of the Atlantic.

Meanwhile, in London, Bob Cobbing (who recently celebrated his 70th birthday) and Adrian Clarke have revived the ever-lively *And* (#7, 2/94), following the publication of the Writers Forum's 500th publication, a 320-page collection of 112 poets, *VerbiVisiVoco*, that seems the antithesis of the "high-seriousness" often associated with the practice of verse in the U.S. as well as the U.K. Writers Forum has been going since 1963, publishing books and supporting alternative writing practices through its frequent workshops. The anthology, coedited by Cobbing and Bill Griffiths, which has an international lineup, emphasizes performance, sound, visual and conceptual poetry. The result is an exuberant, uneven collection featuring a welcome variety of typographical and visual display, made possible in part by the fact that many of the pages are photocopied from the original Writers Forum books, including some early mimeo works. Also from Writers Forum, and highly recommended, is *ExcLa*, a new "berserk" "supernuminous" collaboration between Maggie O'Sullivan and Bruce Andrews, filled with "whistling ablutions," "lemony innuendo," and "Unfixed Palettes." (Writers Forum: 89a Petherton Road, London N5 2QT.)

One of the great literary events in Britain in the past few years is surely the 1992 publication of *Future Exiles: 3 London Poets* by Paladin, a trade press now owned by HarperCollins. The three poets—Allen Fisher (b. 1944), Bill Griffiths (b. 1948), and Brian Catling (b. 1948)—have each included 150-page selections from their work. Griffiths has organized his "Selected Poems, 1969-1989" alphabetically by title. Griffiths's use of "prison talk, biker talk, dialect, literal translation, ancient English, phonetic spellings, obscure nicknames, opaque references, playfully and violently rearranged [syntax]" (to appropriate Jeff Nuttall's introduction), within poems that are sonically saturated and often madcap, make him one of the premier exponents of what I call ideolectical poetry. Griffiths is also a superb translator of Old English; see, for example, his translation of *The Battle of Maldon* (Pinner, Middlesex: Anglo-Saxon Books, 1991). Fisher's ambitious projects, most particularly a thorough refiguring of the complex of relations among information systems, theories of knowledge, and poetic processes, are represented here mostly by inclusion of work from the '80s that demonstrates how a "multiplicity of attentions" leads to a poetics of "informed intuition." *Stepping Out* (Pig Press, 1989; distr. SPD, Berkeley) is Fisher's most recent title readily available in the U.S.; I highly recommend it.

Aaron Williamson, who is deaf, has been called one of the best young performance artists in Britain. His new book, *A Holythroat Symposium* (Creation Press, 1993; dist. Inland, East Haven, CT) is a collection of texts based on his performances that explores deafness through language, sound and gesture: "The central design. . . / was to fortify the conjunction / between / a sense of identity / evolving from out of the physical situation . . . / of deafness / and the ongoing exertion. . . / of engendering texts. / That is, to oscillate between / what has become congested / into a state of anatomy / and the mechanical synopsis of its trace / thereby / diminishing the distance / of its seesawing / to this end. // The primary source of identification / the body / as residue / conducting fulgurative interrogations / of the phonic / in and around language / yet to one side of its drag. . . // I wanted to suggest / the sanctity of vocalization / as anatomical process / within an environment / that is usually normalizing it / into an activity that is granted." Williamson's writing is vivid and unexpected, with a striking range of tone and velocity of syntax:

> An artery awash
> impart of tide lines
> evince map-rings
> pith-strung and held
> inside quartz
> wheeling down nerves

lifts
a bracelet of mists
grazing the panic bolt's
arterial latrine of push petals

Peter Larkin (b. 1946) has been publishing a remarkable series of books and pamphlets since *Enclosures* in 1983. Larkin's extension of a Zukofskian sense of word order, indeed his uncompromising commitment to the pleasure of sight, sound and intellect, is evident in his sequence, "Care of the Retract," in *Ten British Poets,* ed. Paul Green (Spectacular Diseases, 1993; 83B London Road, Peterborough, Cambs. PE2 9BS). As "Care of the Retract" is a study of the word *retract,* so *Scarce Norm Scarcer Mean* (Prest Roots Press, 1992; 34 Alpine Court, Kenilworth, Warwickshire) is a set of variations on the poetic economy of scarcity: "The entered order enterprised / whole manners of nature in un- / spent fresco, but would their ventro- / pollutions sing no probal rites / slung to rest idiotypic of all / too much companionate salvage." Larkin's press, Prest Roots, has also published *A Comparative Daimon* (1990), a diaphanously obleak sequence by Paul Green: ". . . A madder, vaster, standard is ascension's; the / pasts are tesserae, and / flash, or / rise, too bleakly for their / time's amount. The / light dies, as if an / application of it meaned a fabric to be torn." I also recommend from Spectacular Diseases: Ulli Freer's "darting" "kicking" "magnetic" collection *Stepping Space* (1990). (Paul Green's Spectacular Diseases is also an excellent source for obtaining U.K. "little press" materials.)

Two of the best recent books from British poets have been published in the U.S.: Tom Raworth's *Eternal Sections* (Sun & Moon, 1993) and Ken Edwards's *Good Science* (Roof, 1992). In *Good Science,* Edwards (b. 1950), who edited the galvanizing magazine *Reality Studios* in the '70s and '80s, moves through a variety of forms, showing a moral imagination and generosity of engagements that make his book, to quote the "Preface," "agitational, molecular, powerful, disparate, innumerable, blank, necessary, accurate, conscious, communal, conservative." The sheer social force of Raworth's resolutely ongoing work produces resonating concatenations that extend beyond the borders of the book. Raworth (b. 1938), whose work is extensively published in the U.S., including *Tottering State: Selected and New Poems 1963-1983* (The Figures, 1994; distrb. SPD) and *Visible Shivers* (O Books, 1987; distr. SPD), also has two chapbooks in the Equipage series (see below): *Blue Screen* (1992) and *Survival* (1994). *Emptily,* a book-length work by Raworth, is featured in *Talus* #7 (1992), an excellent journal out of London (English Dept., King's College, Strand, WC2R 2LS).

Also in the U.S., *Abacus* #81 (4/94; distr. SPD) features *Upstate Stoic* by *Floating Capital* poet Gilbert Adair: a vibrant foray into hyperreality (e.g. "accelerated motion" at "60-noise-proof"). *Floating Capital*'s editor Adrian Clarke is the author of *Obscure Disasters* (Writers Forum, 1993), a work that is acrobatically infectious in a way that brings to ear both O'Sullivan and Raworth. Clarke's poetry is dizzying in its momentum, constantly shifting linguistic focus with a stream of constant attention to contour (line) as outer edge of a probing, probational activity ("fixed pattern arraying idiolect / in a standardized exchange / letters for meaning what / you won't again borders / protect the field blocked / to centre misnomers on / scattered leaves heard right"). Clarke is the subject of the first of 12 single-author "resource" issues focussing on "linguistically innovative poetries" (bibliographies, commentary, new work) of Robert Sheppard's newly revived magazine *Pages* (239 Lessington Avenue, London SW17).

Rod Mengham, a poet and critic of the immediate postwar generation, who teaches at Cambridge University, is editing a determined series of chapbooks under the Equipage imprint (Mengham, Jesus College, Cambridge CB5 8BL). About 20 have appeared so far. While some of this work, but more generally some of the poetic tendencies often associated with "Cambridge," get bogged down in a decorous solemnity that pulls back from the "wild" sonic and formal risks sometimes gestured at, there is certainly an enormous commitment, not to say devotion) evident. Still, the virtually reified rhetorical surface of the sprung lyric—"the voice belongs in the words and not to a speaker," in J.H. Prynne's words—can seem more a house style than a ticket to a "true" poetry that "wrings the heart," more a "vehement theology of the Word" than a participatory democracy of language. Isn't the jeopardy, indeed, "false assuagement," clinging to the vestiges of the old music as if it were the only music, the old truths as if they were the only truths? In any case, much admirable work is being published by this press. Michael Haslam's *Four Poems* (Equipage, 1993), continuing in the direction of his earlier *Aleethia* and especially his amazing *Continual Song*, is the most over-the-top in wildly lyric, Blakean excess; while a younger poet, D.S. Marriott (b. 1963), often seems to glide giddily on the affective musical surfaces of self-eviscerating lyrics, making his poems attractively difficult to pin down in their nonetheless manifest allegiances and resistances (see *Airs & Ligatures* [Prest Roots, 1990] as well as *Lative* [Equipage, 1992]). Prynne's *Her Weasels Wild Returning* (1994), while as dense as ever, seems almost nostalgic, in a biting sort of way, for the gender narrative of the somewhat-less-than wild lyric tradition—though note the literally equivocating ("weaseling"!) title of this Equipage edition. Peter Riley's Equipage title, *Lecture* (1993) suggests another way of framing the problem: it is notable for its foregrounded reworking of lyric

and liturgical forms. Riley publishes a fine series of letterpress pamphlets under Poetical Histories imprint—31 have been issued since 1985; Riley, as bookseller, is also a good source for small press work (27 Sturton Street, Cambridge CB1 2QU).

Denise Riley has included her Equipage chapbook, *Stair Spirit,* in *Mop Mop Georgette: New and Selected Poems: 1986–1993* (Reality Street, 1993; distr. SPD), an engaging multiplicitously self-reflective and self-refractive collection (from "Lyric": "Take up a pleat in this awful / process and then fold me flat / inside it so that I don't see / where I was already knotted in.") Also new from Reality Street/Studios is Wendy Mulford's *The Bay of Naples.*

The New British Poetries: The Scope of the Possible, ed. Robert Hampson and Peter Barry (Manchester University Press, 1993; distr. St. Martin's, NY, for an outrageous $70) is one of the few substantial collections of essays on the topic and is a good companion to *The New British Poetry.* It features useful summaries of recent poetic history by Mottram ("The British Poetry Revival, 1960-75"), D'Aguir ("Black poetry in Britain"), Roger Ellis (little magazines); Peter Middleton ("The Politics of Subjectivity"), Hampson ("Language and Ideology"), Helen Kidd ("Women, Writing, and Experience"), as well as Barry on Fisher, David Miller on Gael Turnbull and Sheppard on Lee Harwood. Commentary on the new British Poetry, along with much other poetry, can also be found in *fragmente* (11 Lansdowne House, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, Manchester M20 6UJ), which has published 5 issues since 1990, focussing on such topics as "women and (post)modernism," "language writing" and "pastoral."

Considering how inhospitable the alternative British poetry scenes appear to be for women, Peter Middleton's remarkable new study, *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture* (Routledge, 1993) is not only necessary medicine, it is a pioneering work in how we can understand what is often regarded as gender neutral as indeed examples of the work of "men poets." Middleton, a poet and professor at the University of Southampton, insists that we bring the maleness of supposedly neutral writing by men out of the closet of its imaginary invisibility. See also his essay "Silent Inscriptions of Gender: Recent Men's Poetry" in *fragmente* #4.

&, finally, before I return to my senses, or wherever it is I am returning to, let me recommend just a few more books: *Uncertain Time* by Richard Caddel (Galloping Dog, 1990; 45 Salisbury Gardens, Newcastle upon Tyme NE2 1HP); *The Sway of Precious Demons: Selected Poems by Geraldine Monk* (North and South, 1992; distr. SPD); Tom Pickard's *Tiepin Eros: New and Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe, 1994); and a three-book set of Anthony Barnett's *Little Stars and Straw Breasts,* his Zanzotto translations, and a collection about his work, from which I have quoted Prynne above

(Allardyce; distr. SPD). Some of these books will be available by mail from Compendium Bookshop, 234 Camden High Street, London NW1 8QS.

—CHARLES BERNSTEIN

Rootworks

Mackey. Nathaniel Mackey published three books in 1993, and one in 1994, all worthy of serious scrutiny, beyond the sheer fact of such publication, itself notable. Trekking down three parallel, interlocking, separate, and interloping paths at once, in a kind of rotational repositioning, Mackey moves among his three genres with elegance and decidedness. His book of poetry is *School of Udhra* (San Francisco: City Lights), his book of fiction is *Djbot Baghostus's Run* (Los Angeles: Son & Moon), and his book of criticism is *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing* (New York: Cambridge University Press). In addition, this year (1994) Moving Parts Press in Santa Cruz has brought out a limited edition of *Song of the Andoumboulou: 18–20,* signed by Mackey. It would be of interest to those interested in fine printing and design (70 Cathedral Drive, Santa Cruz, CA 95060), aside from the intrinsic interest of its being further meditations down the serial, exploratory path of his poetry, as the Andoumboulou series shifts from lyric singularities of its earliest manifestations to collective investigations of Sophia and the sophic.

In poetry (familiar to readers of *Avec, Conjunctions, Sulfur, Mandorla* and his own *Hambone)* his is a loose line, page dance play among myth, sexuality, music and an emotional knowingness across a range from dream and meditation, to talismanic appropriations of specific African, Caribbean, Spanish/Moorish and African-American spirits, gods, orishas, situations, stories. The odyssey in this work is a struggle with the erotic, with desire and the song, both demanding considerable attentiveness and trials of initiation, including fine-tuned listening to musicians and sages—oftentimes the same. The work is studiedly cross-cultural, in a principled ethnopoetical stance. In fact, it invents or imagines new places and peoples, travels to them (sometimes in dream), studies new sites, hears and invents new anagrammic words somewhat "Ahttless"ly, rather in the tradition of the imaginary voyage. Incidentally, Mackey (citing Edouard Glissant) feels strongly that "ethnopoetics can go both ways." (DE 261) This means that

we are talking about an "edge. . .where differences intersect" (DE 260), a border, a porous middle ground of cultural engagement between different and disparate cultures, not the colonizing or primitivizing pleasures of dominance over cultures secretly condescended to. In all of his work, Mackey is like a shuttle, weaving between.

Mackey believes, with Robert Duncan, in the investiture of the real and the historical by a constant spiritual watchfulness and force. The turns and gestures one makes in one's own life are filled with shadow meanings, portents, reminiscences of other meanings from other times, as if one acted, filled with, possessed by others. The key phrase for this apprehension comes from Mackey's *Discrepant Engagement:* he speaks of "the co-inherence of immanence and transcendence." (DE 232) It is a term of great importance to summarize the processes of his historical/mythical imagination, in which the social and the metaphysical are linked. (The essay from which these terms come, "Sound and Sentiment, Sound and Symbol," can also be found in *The Politics of Poetic Form,* ed. Charles Bernstein.)

> Rolled a
> joint with gunpowder
> inside, struck a match,
> whispered, "This is
> what history does."
> Said, "Above sits
> atop its Below, each
> undoing the other
> even though they
> embrace."
>
> Went up in smoke, lit
> by feathers of light,
> debris falling for
> ages. . .
>
> (SU 33)

Mackey is always scrying, looking into, under, beyond, through. He is called to read signs, and the process is both desirable and taxing (one of his poem titles is "Irritable Mystic"); he is called to be that through which a braided and multiple set of cultural materials speaks and works. A root working.

Mackey designs linked sequences in both his poetry and fiction. *School of Udbra* is divided into three parts, with alphabetic indicators of beginning (Andoumboulou), middle (Outlantish), and end (Zar). It seems as if the first section enters into a land or site whose myths ("mu") and musics are the

subject of the next two parts. The first section continues the meditative serial poem called "Song of the Andoumboulou" which began in Mackey's first book of poetry *(Eroding Witness,* 1985): "the song of the Andoumboulou is addressed to the spirits." (In fact, however, the whole book is written under the sign of Andoumboulou.) It is a sequence containing paths of initiation to and through rich, polyvalent diasporic cultures, so that Mackey as the singer takes the shapes and voices, is instructed by, and reenacts the situations of a multiplicity of African, Arab, African-American folks—whether gods, spirits, or musicians.

> Uplifted arms of an Osirian ropewalk,
> erratic
> moonsluice, Legba's crutch.
> The
>
> unswung dancers of Thoth, wide-eyed
> interpreters,
> their book the loosed embers
> of dusk.
>
> (SU 4)

In the use of Legba, the crippled dancer, an image and idea central to Mackey is alluded to—an image of plenitude and vocation, not of loss: "the figure of the phantom limb." "The phantom limb is a felt recovery, a felt advance beyond severance and limitation which contends with and questions conventional reality [;. . .] it's a feeling for what's not there which reaches beyond as it calls into question what is." (DE 235) The phantom limb is to this poet what the caduceus is to the doctor in H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud.*

One attractive feature of this work is the use of the page. Mackey first loosens the poem's joints, lets in a good deal of air and light, or the silence and offbeat counter-rhythm. The poems are like spirals, carefully dervishing. Then, for some poems, he adds kinds of codicils, or addenda, separated from the main poem by a line on the page, and often by a good deal of space. It is as if he is creating an underside for the poem, a commentary or gloss on it, a note for it, a ratio or relationship with it, or a related set of rereadings of the situation outlined in the main poem. This line is a powerful tactic; that Mackey indicates something vital by it is shown by the way the lines get repeated in the table of contents. Indeed, the "graphic aspect" of Mackey's poetry is very striking. I am citing that phrase from his study of Charles Olson, an essay which is a penetrating attack on those who would make unequal binaries of pairs like musical/visual and oral/literate in their implications as open and closed: for, in Mackey's words, "neither

orality nor 'graphicity' is monolithic" but are tools "available to either inclination." (DE 125, 124) In any event, there are many reasons both in intellectual history and in history that an African-American poet might be imagined to say: When I hear the word "oral," I reach for my pen.

Djbot Baghostus's Run is a wonderful novel, both very readable and very deep, and pretty wry and funny to boot. Set in a few months between 1981 and 1982, it is written, for the most part, in letters by "N," a musician in a jazz group, to his correspondent "Angel of Dust." (This is the second volume of "an ongoing work" called *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate;* the first volume was *Bedouin Hornbook,* 1986). We have just N's meditative half of the correspondence, but the novel also contains three narratives called "After-the-Fact Lecture/Libretto" which tell or sing part of the story as a potential opera in versions from other members of the band (Aunt Nancy, Lambert, Penguin). The group needs a drummer; the women in the group want it to be another woman. The search for this drummer, the relations among the group, their premonitory dreams, visions, jolts, fears, pressures and bonds take on the dynamics of a full-fledged, though multi-personed Quest. Part of the Quest, for example, is to gain and lose enough to perform well on their gig in New York. But the real satisfaction of the narrative is one's immersion, as a leader, in a paisley-rich multiple-patterned intelligent study of inner quests, and the responsibilities they bring.

Everything set down is read, reread, and then read inside out; the mental processes of the characters, the style of the book, and what it considers incidents are all about syncopations of signs—unpredictable, stern and friendly at once. Signs and symbols, dreams and associations, messages sent in quotations of songs are some of the mentors for characters in the book. The book works by complex, pun-filled, nuanced reading the signs which gesture, dream, chance, memory lay before the characters. In fact, even characters are characters. Eventually, for example, the memorable title is glossed—the "D" as the mark of the "Duende" and Andalusian song; the changes of Jarred Bottle (a soulful character in a libretto—by N? or perhaps N himself?) to "jbot"; the "B/Ba" and "ghost" of Baghostus. Mackey is a master of sinewy, artful, cable-twisted sentences in which the feeling of music, the playing of music, the spiritual practice of music, and allusions to known musicians capture the reader in a net of attention.

It remains to note that this book is enveloped in one of Sun & Moon's absolutely arresting covers: two black men, one of whom has a whiteface skull and an orange skullcap painted on his face and head. The cover is not as funny as the book, but it expresses the X-ray vision, and the flip into a sense of confrontative spirit worlds that the book offers.

Hejinian. Another recent novel which pushes the bounds of fiction and features, as well as a collective protagonist is Lyn Hejinian's *OXOTA:*

A Short Russian Novel. This maybe old news (as it was published by The Figures in 1991), but it shouldn't be, although Hejinian has, more recently, published *The Cell* and *The Cold of Poetry* (Sun & Moon, respectively 1992 and 1994). In an odd way, Hejinian is an ethnographic writer, taking notes with curiosity, empathy, and difficulties of translation, having achieved that wry, suspicious, distant implication of the observer-participant. "It is description that raises scrutiny to consciousness, and in arguing for this I am proposing a poetry of consciousness, which is by its very nature a medium of strangeness." *(Poetics Journal* 8, 44) This citation contains central operable terms, especially the identification of consciousness with strangeness. Strangeness way be further noted as a mediating or third way between realism (the world described) and lyricism (the expressed feeling of a perceiver).

Oxota (pronounced oh-ho-ta and meaning The Hunt) proceeds on a witty premise: the desire of an American woman tourist to write "the great Russian novel"—one might here make some feminist remarks about the presumed nature and gender of "the great American novel" on which Hejinian comments and to which she aspires—but let's instead observe that she does so by borrowing the model of Eugene Onegin, Pushkin's "free novel" in verse, thus complicating the matter generically, and drawing closer (for many reasons) to Byron's *Don Juan* than to Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh.* Her genealogy, concerning consciousness, language, and strangeness, one might draw from William (though not rejecting Henry) James and Gertrude Stein. So Hejinian does realism aslant of the novel, and does the dream without surrealism.

The work is not really based in event, but rather the poetics may be something like "An Anecdote is Perceived thru the Density of Observation." (O 118) Nor is it based, as most novels are, in disclosure—there are no secrets, no betrayals, no big turning points or discoveries. Rather—in one of the 1001 of Hejinian's brilliant aphorisms—"What remains to say was hardly there—as if one told but could not recognize" (O 288) or "Pushkin the person is dead but the novel won't come to that end/ All's again plotless, as it should be/ What was time is weightless and pitiless. . .(O 279). The hunt is precisely this—a denomination of the many alternatives, not a hunt for the meaning, but a hunt for convergences, motion, connections spread wide and twinkling, for "the construction of small resonating forms." (O 210) This is an unabashedly Steinian poetics, based on "perspective spread over a largish surface, located in innumerable non-isolating focal points." *(Temblor* 3, 134)

Oxota is based on the travels of Hejinian and some American companions to Leningrad where they join other Russian companions in a temporary collectivity—a number of characters banded together to build a mutually interactive set of subjectivities "in the makeshift intimacies of the

cluttered room." (O 77) There is no romance plot, or any one (i.e. often Oedipal) plot. It is a book filled with half-told stories, the eros of foreignness, and a changeable, shambling collective protagonist whose articulation is part of the point. The novel is like the middle part of Homer's or anyone's "odyssey" (but studiedly not an epic), narrating travels inside and outside a household, a work in which guest-host relations are very important, and in which shared stories of the marvelous and the daily are the basis of exchange. (Although disclosure is very much the point of Homer's work, so the comparison cannot be exact.) The work, something like the intricate, death-warding, sleep substitute of the *1001 Nights*, also articulates the poetics of the dream: "Books usually seek, Lydia said/ A dream has no position after itself, only its own position." (O 226) In ways that I will explore in relation to Blaser, this work may be said to draw for its praxis on the poetics of serial poems and on the essay.

Blaser. The "co-inherence of immanence and transcendence" (to repeat Mackey's terms) marks the work of Robin Blaser. When asked by the fact finders of the reference work *Contemporary Authors* to name his religion, Blaser said "Imagination." That he simultaneously denominated his politics as socialist suggests that utopian desire, ethical hope, and ready astonishment fuel him. Blaser may be said to have optimism of the intellect *and* optimism of the will. *Astonishments* (incidentally) is the title of his forthcoming book of collected essays; I am noting here *The Holy Forest*, which constitutes Blaser's collected poems from 1959-1993, though this formulation is not given on the title page (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1993), since the project is ongoing.

> we still dream behind us of a perfected
> humanity a religion of cities and
> take the thought east the twentieth-
> century project, delving centuries of
> mind and heart for a new relation among
> things,
>
> overwhelmed
>
> to dream again
> of *laissez-faire* going fair along paths
> through the gardened wreckage and consequences
>
> (HF 302)

Blaser has been, since 1962, engaged on a long serial work called "Image-nation"; as with Mackey's career (though a generation earlier) the desire to declare for a project of serial work occurs from the beginning, and

occurs for similar reasons—to examine "the co-inherence of immanence and transcendence."

In this serial project Blaser and Spicer were companions; indeed their terms are original and now central to any discussion of seriality. First, a serial poem is a cast into a wilderness: planlessness, risk, movement with the work, heuristic form are all central qualities. This may be one meaning of Blaser's "holy forest" title—it is the wilderness of exploratory form. Spicer: "you have to go into a serial poem not knowing what the hell you're doing. That's the first thing. You have to be tricked into it. It has to be some path that you've never seen on a map before." (Spicer: "Excerpts from the Vancouver Lectures," in *Poetics of the New American Poetry,* 233) It's as if the signs are wiser than the person; the person must follow the signs even if they are tricksters. Spicer cites Blaser with his metaphor of dark and light—in a serial poem: "it's as if you go into a room, a dark room, the light is turned on for a minute, then it's turned off again, and then you go into a different room where a light is turned on and turned off." This pocky semi-Enlightenment epistemological rhythm reserves a strong place for mystery. The citation features the curious analogy of room to stanza or a poem. Serial poems then become the "house with many mansions"—my favorite bit from the Christian Bible—offering plural and diverse possibilities, without ground rules for what goes inside a poem and what stays outside, and as well the suggestive mess of getting mansions into houses. This passage as well proposes the sense of illumination and then (frightening, generative) darkness (without narrative connection) which is certainly true of the serial work of, say, Oppen. The non-narrative, or special narrative of the rejection of monodirectional story is another part of the practice of serial poems: "the poems tend to act as a sequence of energies which run out when so much of a tale is told." (Blaser "The Fire," in *Poetics of NAP,* 237) Sequencing of metamorphic materials, rather than narrative, is central.

Finally, the movement of Blaser's poems is a pulse of accumulative streaming across a field of perception. His poems shed light, and work through darkness too, and exist as a kind of powerful levity or lightness. This cast across a field, learned from Olson, is nonetheless not filled with an Olsonic desire for mastery and insistence, but is pleased that one perception and association will charmingly and fluently and surprisingly lead to another. "I like to describe this in Ovidian terms as a *carmen perpetuum,* a continuous song, in which the fragmented subject matter is only apparently disconnected." (Blaser, "The Fire" 238) The metamorphoses of "continuous song" is one key practice in Blaser's work.

In "Image-Nation" the reference is clear. This is a nation of beloved imagi (images, people and visions), beyond nationalisms of any sort. It is the only citizenship Blaser desires, as well as the only religion. Poem by

poem in this serial work, of which *The Holy Forest* contains twenty-five examples, he builds a world in which serious meditation about the links among the political, the social, the economic, the erotic, the ethical and democracy can occur, valuing, at every turn that which is "incomplete, and by nature unstable and creative." (HF 324) The seriality here is a desire to make, remake, reexamine, recombine elements; in many ways each poem is something built and broken down at once (which makes him difficult to cite effectively). "Hymns and fragments" might be a characteristic title and poetics; he likes to cite so that he both illustrates and represents that "the sign as a witness of something that is forever elsewhere" (cited from Richard Sieburth) or "always thinking somewhere else" (which is a description of Montaigne). The series begins deepening and thickening around the 5th or 7th, under the break and movement around Vietnam and our country's war politics, and in the aftermath of Spicer's death.

> this co-herence falls, like rain,
> into the syllables
> this in-herence
> of a golden poem
> translating
> blood, dancers
> and whirling
> drunken lives
> into a tense
> music
> of a hollyhock
>
> (HF 115)

The "Image-Nations" are probably, centrally, about desire which is the imagination.

> he has only the stories to tell, naked
> and plotless, the spiritual territories,
> earth-images and sky-maps, dark
> at the edges
>
> the mechanic of the marvelous dreamed
> of Stalin and Hitler and the ordinary. . . .
>
> (HF 265)

or from the magnificent Image-Nation 23, an evocation of the public role of the artist:

the *eros* of chances among things and
their *signs which are movable parts of the syntax*
dazed
in the circularity of desire and thought
we see through

(HF 328)

Blaser makes a claim for the poet as public intellectual because of being one of the notable explorers of a situational and perpetually unfolding (perpetually singing—carmen perpetuum) reality. As Miriam Nichols says, in a fine and intelligent account of Blaser in *Sagetrieb* 9 (1/2), "The function of aesthetics [for Blaser] is not to solve social problems nor to reveal truths (restore religion), but to engage in an activity creative of 'meaning and thing.'" *(Sagetrieb* 131) It seems to me that Blaser's work offers essays; that the essay is like a genre in poetry; it may be the root genre of our poetry. This for a number of reasons—the localizing and not totalizing of claims to truth, the citation strategy, the play with vectors of meaning, and of course the "essaying" or trying out of ideas, the virtu of endlessly exploratory probing.

Blaser's work is adorable, speaking to the nobility, the erotics, and the politics of a desire for human possibility within the boundaries of a situational ethics and historical sense.

I have tried for 35 years to
redefine sweetness—it is what
they called being—

(HF 273)

—RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS

Noticings

I showed a friend the first issue of the shiny new journal *lingo* and he saw the photograph of Bernadette Mayer and exclaimed, "She looks like Janis Joplin!" Among the poetry jocks in my neighborhood—students, scholars, poets, would-be and won't-be poets and the sometimes hallucinated and rarely real casual reader—Bernadette Mayer is a favorite, a scandal to

sophomores and a badge for the self-elected few. It is Ohio after all, and Bernadette Mayer will do them all some good.

In the interview in *lingo* Mayer says "And I think that it's one of the most vital things I have felt lately as an 'old' person, which is to make it clear to other people that I like all kinds of poetry." This is said to Michael Gizzi in the context of an informal discussion of the possibilities of the "I" as the "other" in poems, of the use of the first person in modes other than those employed by so-called "confessional" poets. Later Mayer says a little more about what she means by liking all kinds of poetry: "I just want to say that I think it's really important to love all kinds of poetry and to realize that for the whole history of the planet there have been all these different kinds of poetry, and people are, I think, too involved in Western Civilization, and I think Western Civilization should be given the loss." Those last remarks about Western Civilization probably contradict the first remark about "liking everything," but I don't especially care about that. As a relative newcomer to her work reading through the purple *A Bernadette Mayer Reader* (New Directions, 1992) I was struck by how much the history of western poetry is a presence in her work, vitally so. That is, Mayer's work is testimony to the enduring power of the poetry of Catullus and Villon as much as it is an extension of Stein and O'Hara and other more recent writers. While I can see why the prose works of Mayer—the fabulous *Memory* and the much-awaited and soon-to-appear *The Desires of Mothers to Please Others in Letters* (Hard Press)—might be of great interest to a younger generation of experimentalists, for me it is Mayer's impersonations, imitations, and translations of Catullus and the Greek Anthology that impress most. Performative and explicit, she gender-crashes the Catullan complaint. Few of her contemporaries so merit the basketball epithet: "in your face." Her deictics and the occasional use of the conventions of direct address make her one of our best love poets and, it also occurs to me, from the perspective of "Western Civilization" one of our most deeply "traditional" poets. (Whatever western civilization is in its many contradictions and complexities.) The speedy, compact, controlled spasms of her syntax together with her debt to Catullus and Villon and the Greek Anthology offer another model for working beyond the Romantic lyric, while in the prose texts she keeps pace with younger poets who sometimes seem to have made use of Stein's work and little else. Who else but Mayer can write

> Other than what's gone on and stupid art
> I've no even memory of people and their part
> In bed I forget all details
> The female with the male entails. . .

or

> you are you since you love to be
> identifiable things you are the perilous
> chance lover of the splashing blue finder (that is hell)
> you dont wear a hologram or safety pin you are
> I take them one by one both dude & dudette
> you are the peristalsis of all our necklaces. . .

Charles Bernstein has tangoed with Swinburne, Campion, and Wilde, there is Eshleman's Blake and Palmer's Hölderlin, and so on and so on—I've not forgotten you, friend—but the Romans and the Greeks seem lately to have disappeared from view a little. And for good reasons one supposes, attached as they have sometimes been to the excesses of Eurocentrism. Even the great classicist Ralph Johnson once said to me that he found it hard to regret the wasting away of classics departments, their fall from a prestige once ingloriously fondled. But then one reads Bernadette Mayer's lyrics or finds Jim Powell's *Sappho: A Garland* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 1993), by miles the best Sappho available. Powell's Sappho is syntactically and rhythmically a marvel:

> Artfully adorned Aphrodite, deathless
> child of Zeus and weaver of wiles I beg you
> please don't hurt me, don't overcome my spirit,
> goddess, with longing,
>
> but come here, if ever at other moments
> hearing my words from afar you listened
> and responded. . .

There is a serious reading of Horace, Basil Bunting, and others mediating this translation, just as there is a fascinating rip-off of Bob Dylan's "Visions of Johanna" in the book's last. If I could explain exactly how it is that Powell manages to pace this work so that individual words stand forth as separate and distinct musics as the sentence subtly moves them along and across line breaks—if I could, I would. In the book's appendix Powell tries to explain how he works Sappho's quantitative measures in the stress rhythms of English.

But I am still thinking, what can it mean to like all kinds of poetry? Goddamn it Keith will not be nice! Slim work for the critic, that's what it means. Somebody's still gotta take out the trash? I guess we could agree not to "notice" the trash at least until it threatens to breed a few rats. But anymore, it's hard to find really big rats in the poetry world for all the mice.

And, with so little poetry being reviewed, what do we do with cheesy phrases like "official verse culture" or "mainstream poetry"? Perhaps we could inject a little humor into the republic of letters by insisting that the mainstream is in need of a little sifting in ferocious journals like *Sulfur*. But we'd have to find it first—it was last sighted by "language poets." The latest SPD catalogue optimistically notes that "It even seems that *Publisher's Weekly* itself is reviewing more small press and more poetry titles than ever before." That is the work of individual heroes in the institutions of the "mainstream," one of whom I'm happy to name—Molly McQuade.

Of course it's well-known that reviews don't necessarily make for readers, but, to speak informally, it's also good to know that something's "getting through." Ah, for a publicity machine to project us into middle America—say Ohio! Say Ypsilanti, Ashtabula, Isis (Indiana), even Iowa City? Poems on cereal boxes?

I'd be sorry if I closed without mentioning the first American book publication of Kamau Brathwaite's poems, the New Directions edition of *Middle Passages* (apparently the Bloodaxe volume of the same title, published a year or two ago, is revised in this edition). Among other poems several sections of the third volume of Brathwaite's second trilogy, *X/Self* are reworked here in the exploded, creolized fonts that are part of Brathwaite's evolving "sycorax video style," which seems equally a poetic intervention in computer technology and a further refinement of the intonations and inflections of what Brathwaite calls "nation language" as well as the polyrhythms that support and enact it. Some of Brathwaite's essays are now available in the collection *Roots*, from The University of Michigan Press, which has also recently republished several books by George Lamming and deserves credit for getting the texts out there for use as more and more academics begin thinking about Caribbean literature. Finally, it is worth mentioning on that score that New Directions plans to issue Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith's University of California Press translation of Césaire's *CAHIER D'UN RETOUR AU PAYS NATAL* as a separate volume.

—KEITH TUMA

For Palestine, Edited by Jay Murphy. Writers & Readers, 252 pp. $14.95 (paper)

The ceremonial signing of "Declaration of Principles," (the Oslo agreement) by Yitzak Rabin and Yasser Arafat on the White House Lawn was not the first step on the road to "a just and comprehensive peace" between Israelis and Palestinians, but an act of surrender by the PLO chairman. This is the opinion of most of the important Palestinian intellectuals and professionals, both in and outside of the occupied territories and not just of Hamas and other groups the media have labeled "extremist."

Those supporting the accords, the critics say, are doing so as a means of lining their pockets or gaining a political position. The masses of Palestinians, meanwhile, remain uninformed of the details since Mr. Arafat has not seen fit to provide them with an Arabic translation.

Most of Arafat's critics had strong links to the PLO and were previously committed to "the peace process," i.e., the creation of a separate Palestinian state alongside Israel. Rather than moving events in that direction, they view the Oslo and subsequent Cairo agreements as a means of consolidating Israel's rule over the territories, *including* the "autonomy" areas where Israel's more than two thousand military orders will remain in force.

Within the U.S., two of the agreements' most vocal opponents have been Edward Said and Naseer Aruri, both former members of the Palestine National Council, the PLO's ruling body until preempted by Arafat. They are also contributors to "For Palestine," an eclectic collection of twenty-four essays, poems and interviews together with photographs from the pre-Oslo era, produced by what fellow contributor, artist and critic Kamal Boullata embraces as "the community of resistance." They have been made into a readable whole by Jay Murphy, former editor of the New Orleans' literary journal, *Red Bass*, in which many of the articles originally appeared.

Murphy's selections traverse an eventful decade of Palestinian history beginning with Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 through the first five years of the Intifada and the Gulf War. He intended "For Palestine" to be "a document of diverse solidarity with the brave young fighters in Khan Younis, Nablus, Jebalya, Tafah, Askar, Ramallah, and elsewhere who are fighting to end the illegal occupation of their country" and so it is.

That the man who those "brave young fighters" looked to for leadership appears to have become a partner with their occupier, may come as a shock for readers not finely tuned to the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But this is what Said, Arruri and the others have been saying. In articles, declarations, petitions, letters and over *Internet*, they have accused the PLO chairman of legitimizing Israel's settlements and its *de facto* annexation of

occupied West Bank and Gaza land while promising to suppress continued resistance in areas still under direct Israeli military control. As of midsummer, this included forty percent of the Gaza Strip and all of the West Bank minus Jericho's 20 square kilometers.

Indeed, Israeli Prime Minister Rabin has indicated that should the Palestinian police and the new "autonomy" authorities not prevent attacks on either Israeli soldiers or Jewish settlers in the areas still under Israeli occupation, "Gaza-Jericho first," will become "Gaza-Jericho last."

It is in this unfortunate context that readers will experience "For Palestine" and understand the frustrations of those Palestinians who believe their struggle has been betrayed.

Until Oslo, Aruri and Said, like most Palestinian activists, were committed to the principle of "unity" and were reticent to publicly vent their private criticism of either the PLO or Arafat. After Oslo, the rules of the game changed. Readers will note Said's discomfort with his earlier position in this response from a 1991 interview by David Barsamian:

> "But the official nationalists, for example, of the PLO that represents all Palestinians, whether we like it or not, like all nationalist movements, has its orthodoxy, its official line, and I have sometimes felt very uncomfortable with that, at the same time that, obviously, I support it." (P. 178)

Aruri, in a comprehensive introduction detailing "Palestinian Travails in the Last Decade," simply reaffirms "the fact that it [the PLO] is the liberation movement of the Palestinian people and its expression of identity." (p. 14)

As a non-Palestinian, Noam Chomsky, perhaps the most important domestic critic of Israel, needed to observe no such restraints when interviewed by Murphy in July, 1992:

> ". . .the PLO has been one of the most incompetent, corrupt liberation movements I have ever encountered. For example, it is the only Third World movement I know of which has not even tried to gain some domestic support among the American population. . . . They are very anti-democratic and very feudalist, internally." (P. 221)

Chomsky was not entirely accurate about the failure of the PLO to curry U.S. support. The problem was that its efforts here were almost entirely focused on winning over segments of the liberal Jewish community to the Palestinian cause, while ignoring potential allies in the African-American, Latino and Asian-American communities. It was a foolish, as well as

impossible task given the extent to which American Jews have been influenced by pro-Israel and anti-Arab propaganda.

The degree to which this propaganda permeates and controls a key segment of American culture is exposed by Jewish filmmaker Joan Mandell in her article, "From the War in Palestine to the War on Censorship." Mandell, who made the award winning "Gaza Ghetto" (1st Prize, Festival dei Popolo, Italy, 1985) examines the successful efforts to prevent her own film as well as other independent documentaries on Palestinian issues from being shown in theaters and on television.

The buzz words of censorship, we find, are the same for the mainstream as well as the "public" or "alternative" movie houses and TV stations: "Biased!, Propaganda!, Unbalanced!, Lacking Objectivity!, One-sided!" Mandell writes:

> "Any and every film sympathetic to Palestinians, no matter how compellingly told or beautifully shot, was labeled by detractors: Anti-Israeli!, Controversial!, Partisan!. Our funding was in Conflict of Interest. And all of this before the film was even previewed or screened. Lacking aesthetic standards! Too complex! Inappropriate! Inconvenient! were common reasons why our films could not be funded or shown." (P. 190-191).

The Israeli atrocities and routine abuse of human rights that its American supporters have largely succeeded in keeping from public view, "For Palestine" provides in words. In Jean Genet's "Four Hours in Shatila," the poet writes of his wanderings through "only a twentieth" of the corpse-ridden camp after the massacre in September, 1982: "About forty bodies remain in my memory. All of them—and I mean all—had been tortured, probably against a backdrop of drunkenness, song, laughter, the smell of gunpowder and already decaying flesh" (p. 37).

In Hilton Obenzinger's "Interview with a Defender of the City," (Beirut under Israeli siege in the same year) a woman survivor tells him:

> "Bourj al Barajneh [a refugee camp] was where they threw the napalm. It was disastrous at the beginning because the people didn't realize that when you put a blanket around yourself the napalm ignites even more, and so some people made that mistake. We'd go to the cinemas on Hamra Street that were turned into hospitals. You would recognize the people who were there only by their voices" (P. 41).

In the poet Fawaz Traboulsi's "Beirut-Guernica," he compares the destruction of the Spanish city by the Nazi-backed Falange in 1937 with the actions of the Israeli-backed Lebanese Falange 55 years later:

> "Spain, 1937, General Mola, Franco's right-hand man, says to the London News Chronicle: 'I will not hesitate, if need be, to kill half the Spanish people in order to achieve victory;" then:
>
> "Lebanon, 1982: [Israeli Prime Minister] Menachem Begin says to the press: 'I am ready to kill ten Lebanese civilians and five Palestinians if this leads to the elimination of a single Palestinian *fida'i* [freedom fighter].'" (P. 48)

He kept his word. The final Red Cross figures were 20,000 Lebanese and Palestinian civilians dead.

Stephen Sosebee's "The Intifada in the Camps of Gaza," and Mary Howell's "Ansar III: Camp of the Slow Death" transfer the site of brutality into the occupied territories with the beginning of the Palestinian uprising in December, 1987. The original Ansar was a concentration camp set up for Palestinian prisoners in Southern Lebanon in 1982. By 1988, Israel needed to make room for the more than 15,000 Palestinians they had taken prisoner in the intifada and they opened other camps. The second one the Israelis called Ketziot. The Palestinians named it Ansar III.

> "Simply put," writes Howell, "our delegation found that Ansar III is a facility for torture. Its very existence denies those Palestinian political detainees held there the most fundamental of human and democratic rights. It is not merely a place of detention, but a center of punishment and degradation." (P. 123)

Ansar IV was opened in July, 1989.

What makes the tales of war and occupation so powerfully told in "For Palestine" relevant to American readers is that unlike the horrors that have been taking place in other parts of the world such as Rwanda and Bosnia, they have been paying for it. Each year Congress appropriates between $3.5 to $4 billion which the Israelis collect in cash on October 1st and can then spend in any way they like. It is the only budget item that both the President and Congress have kept off the chopping block and thanks to the efforts of the pro-Israel lobby it is likely to remain so unless an informed, outraged electorate say otherwise.

That, of course, is a long shot enterprise. After reading "For Palestine," it is an effort that readers of "For Palestine" might wish to undertake.

—JEFFREY BLANKFORT

ORIENTALISMO. A review of *For Palestine*, ed. by Jay Murphy (Writers and Readers, New York/London, 1993); paper, 263 pp., $14.95; and *After Jews and Arabs: Remaking Levantine culture*, by Ammiel Alcalay (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993); paper, 336 pp.

In the World of the Imagination (*Mundus Imaginalis*) the city of Jerusalem functions as the objective correlative of everybody's subjective relation with the "Abrahamic Tradition," the conceptual space defined by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In other words, Jerusalem is not only a city but also a symbolic complex—*the* city—the center of the world of many an ancient map, pilgrimage, crusade, and dream. As for the "real" city, its dream-twin has often given birth to its historical misery—its streets running knee-deep in blood; perhaps there have been times when the population would gladly have traded the dangerous glory of symbolic centrality for the dull anonymity of the secular and suburban. But the imaginal Jerusalem is inextricably commingled with the real—in fact, the imaginal *is* included in the real, since it is the source of so much history. One might say that in Jerusalem the imaginal is real but not empirically measurable, not "objective" in the same sense as architecture or blood, because its reality arises from a *collective subjectivity.* It is the inner dreaming of History, of Sacred History, which is also by definition a nightmare of suffocating intensity. The city's dreamtime takes place outside History (like the secret hollow space beneath the Dome of the Rock) but intersects with History as prophecy—and prophecy concerns only doom and transcendence. In Jerusalem the most important spatial coordinates are axial, defined by the rising smoke of sacrifice, or the routes of ascensions into Heaven; but on the horizontal plane energies are blocked and the Profane (which desires simply a life free of tragedy) is forever mocked and thwarted by the verticality of the sacred. The violence of the sacred.

Does it make any sense, then, to speak of Jerusalem (in the next breath) as the symbolic capital of world peace? Of course. "Peace" is also a sacred symbol, an imaginal quality, an abstraction—and Jerusalem is the place where such symbols intersect with History. The pious would say that these symbols or symbolic complexes or archetypes are "more real" than material becoming. Even a materialist who despised all such "bad consciousness" as sheer hallucination would have to admit the historical importance of the "imaginary." (The failure of historical materialism itself to grasp this simple correlation reveals the extent to which it too lived in a world of abstraction and imagination. Its categories were "profane" rather than "sacred"—but

it failed to consider that *all* categories are sacred; it miscalculated the historical importance of religion because it too *was* a religion blinded by "belief," betrayed by Faith.) But even if we realize the imperfection of all "perfect" archetypes or categories, such as "Peace on Earth," we may still consider that to strive for the ideal is the only possible means of living the real. The inevitable failure of the categorical can only be weighed against the intensity of desire:—how much do we *want* a life which is "peaceful"?—not with the peace of death or cessation, but the peace of culture, of conviviality, of "justice"? Does there exist a spirituality of everyday life, subtle enough to understand "peace" as creative tension or harmonious conflict, rather than as totalitarian rigidity? ("They make a desert and call it *pax*," as the Celts said of the Romans.) Could we be reconciled with "Religion"—with Father Abraham—if it were at least able to consider an encounter with such a dynamic or kinetic or impure definition of "peace"? And in this case would we find ourselves able to "believe" (as existential commitment at least) in the sacred destiny of Jerusalem as the City of Peace? Interfaith harmony? "Radical tolerance"?

This question, which concerns the material nature of peace, was focused quite sharply for me by reading and inter-reading these two books—*For Palestine*, and *After Jews and Arabs*. Once we let go of "Peace" as an abstract category or pure essence and reanimate it as desire and as becoming, we can learn at least two things: one, that peace may serve as the dynamic of a culture, and express itself in modes of living-together, of co-creation and cross-cultural synergy. This is the "lesson" of Alcalay's book. Two, that peace is not pure "Peace," that it contains its opposite, and a myriad other contaminants; that one must "fight for peace," not in the Orwellian sense of power dictating the end of contention by the obscenity of violence, but in the sense of "revolution," of people's "justice," of the struggle to disempower violence itself. This is the "lesson" of Murphy's book.

Murphy describes his book, an anthology of essays by Palestinian and pro-Palestinian writers, as a "modest. . . tool for liberation," as a text with polemical intent, as a weapon. But it is far from being the product of a single ideology or even of a coherent politique, and this is its strength. Although it attacks "balance" because "balance" is too often the mask of hegemony, the book itself achieves real balance by letting many voices speak, including not only Jewish voices but also many conflicting Palestinian voices. The PLO comes in for violent criticism and even dismissal from some authors, and the *intifada* is analyzed as a "failure" by others. The limitations and stridencies of a "culture of resistance" are admitted by some, defended by some, renounced by others. After Murphy's introduction and a historical survey by Naseur H. Aruri, Jean Genet sets a kind of post-ideological seal on the rest of the book with his emotional/aesthetic/erotic

invocation of the "happiness" of the Palestinian revolution in 1970 ("The extraordinary evidence of what was happening, the intensity of this joy at being alive, is also called beauty"), and of the repulsive otherness of death in West Beirut, ten years later. Other poetic works appear toward the beginning of the book: Fawwaz Traboulsi's "Beirut-Guernica," some excerpts from Etel Adnan's extraordinary "neo-Levantine" epic, *The Arab Apocalypse*, and "Understanding Revolution" by Ammiel Alcalay (the same who wrote the other book). Kamal Boullata's informative and sensitive essay on Israeli and Palestinian artists should have included more illustrations, and the illustrations that were included should have been captioned! Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi's analysis of the culture of the *intifada*, though too brief, tantalized with revelations of this culture as one of women and young people (even "children"), and of experimentation, of expansion beyond agitprop into the realm of genuine revolutionary aesthetics. But Anita Vitullo poured cold water on my enthusiasm in the next essay by mourning the *intifada's* failure to hold the cultural and social ground it had gained, and the subsequent reappearance of patriarchic hegemony and leftist orthodoxy within the Palestinian movement.

A number of essays deal with the 1991 Gulf War and its impact on the Palestinian situation. The most interesting of these is an anonymous collection of letters written by a Palestinian woman on the West Bank describing the boredom and anxiety of virtual house arrest—the letters are witty in a way that the more rhetorical text by Eqbal Ahmad is not, nor the whistle-blowing bullshit-in-the-US-media piece by Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon. Among the general theoretical essays, I found Daoud Kuttab's "Overview of the *intifada*" particularly moving for its passionate defense and bitter criticism of the *uprising*. Despite the ambiguity of this struggle, or perhaps because of it, I can see it as one of the very few contemporary insurrections which fit Genet's criteria for a liberation which aims—"obscurely—at discovering or rediscovering beauty, that is the intangible, unnameable except by this word." (Another such uprising—so far—would be that of the Zapatista EZLN in Chiapas.) Inasmuch as the *Intifada* represented a rejection of "terrorism" as spectacular violence that can only be recuperated by the Spectacle, and the replacement of terrorism by popular unarmed resistance and "bearing witness," it can be seen as beautiful. To the extent that the *intifada* shared the goals of the Israeli peace movement and in fact consisted of an uprising for peace (as maintained by Hatem I. Hussaini), to that extent it can be seen as beautiful. And to the extent that it was also a social revolution within Palestine, a movement for what Alcalay calls the "remaking of Levantine Culture" as a world of harmony (or at least of creative tension) among all three Faiths of the Holy Land—a culture of cross-cultural synergy, so to speak—I also find it quite beautiful. I would like to reject the "tragedy" of its failure and

betrayal—if only because the very word "tragedy" has become a semantic trap and a negentropic cliché of all the most mendacious and ill-willed "dialog about the Mid East." Is it too much to hope that the "next stage of the *intifada*" could include both Israelis and Palestinians in an uprising against War itself, against the totality of the pure, and for the organic complexity of a multivalent social, for a true "neo-Levantine" world?

In a larger review of *For Palestine*, I would investigate the possibilities of such an "ideal *intifada*" in the light of stimulating contributions made by Edward Said (interviewed by D. Barsamian) and Noam Chomsky (interviewed by Jay Murphy). My specific question, however, is addressed most clearly by A. Alcalay in his *After Jews and Arabs*; in fact if it were not for him I would not have adopted the concept of "remaking Levantine Culture" as the very basis for my question. For that reason alone his book would have appeared to me as a text of personal importance, one of those books which have changed my perception and taught me something new and vitally important for my own "project," in a way which Murphy's book (for all its virtues) did not. My work on Islamic studies, inept as it may be, has aimed at countering the image of Islam and Islamdom as both monolithic and two-dimensional; I've been interested in elements of polyvalency such as Sufism and other esoteric forms, heresies, popular religious art, insurrectionary movements, music, sensuality, and other strains of "impurity" within the culture. I've always found Levantine culture highly seductive because of its incredible patina of syncretism, its "pluralism," its style which is at once so dispersive and yet so immediately recognizable;—its *charm*. Until recently the "middle" East or "oriental" Mediterranean has been the most ethnically un-cleansed area on earth—which is precisely why all crusaders and puritans and rationalists find it so maddening. Dozens of languages, religions, styles, cuisine's, cultural movements, tribes and peoples, all living promiscuously cheek-by-jowl, sometimes melting into one another, hybridizing, cross-fertilizing, spawning beautiful monsters, each enigmatic as a sphinx. . .the ultimate nightmare of imperialist colonialism with all its ideal mental and moral gridwork, its rational categories, its greed and its shame. Now, the oriental Jews, the Arab Jews, the *Sephardim*, have always constituted one of the richest and most brilliant sources of that Levantine "impurity" I find so personally attractive. The Diaspora itself can be seen as a kind of "divine invasion" or infiltration, a seeding of powerful memes and currents of creativity and energy. From Moorish Spain to Persia (in fact, to China), for century upon century, from the pagan era through the whole "Abrahamic" era and up till the 20th century, the story of the oriental Jews in the Orient has been one of co-creation and harmonious tension. The story is not without its moments of overt violence and oppression, of course—not "pure"—but on the whole and over the "long duration" (including the

Islamic period), the oriental Jews have always been recognized as a source of cultural wealth. But the "orientalist" view of this story, as E. Said makes clear, has concentrated on hatred and division, and has failed to ask questions about any role except that of victim. Alcalay points out that this orientalist rhetoric has helped to shape the modern political map of the Mid East, including the cultural map of Israel. The Sephardic communities of the Levant have all disappeared and been absorbed into Israel (except that of Morocco, where Mohammed V extended royal protection to the Jews during WWII)—but the result has not been the remaking of Levantine culture within Israel. Because the Zionism of a Martin Buber or Gershem Sholem lost out to other forms of Zionism, the Oriental heritage of the Sephardim has been devalued in Israel, as the oriental and Arab Jews have come to feel themselves less than first-class citizens. The exclusion of the Palestinians can be accounted for by the same triumphalism of rationality, secular modernism, and European values that alienated the Sephardim; and in fact Alcalay chronicles fascinating examples of solidarity between Palestinians and oriental Jews in Israel, united against a coldness that oppresses both peoples.

After Jews and Arabs is a large, complex (and sometimes confusing) attempt to evoke the entire Sephardic experience from the 9th century to the present. This single book should really be expanded to about ten books; after all, S. D. Goitein devoted ten volumes just to the Cairo Geniza and the world depicted in its mountain of papyri and book-fragments, bills of lading and love letters, etc., etc.—Alcalay quotes only a few tantalizing pages. Perhaps Alcalay has tried too many things at once here: social history, literary history and criticism, theory, personal memoir, "poem," polemic, and a huge selection of quotations, almost amounting to an anthology, from rare and little known Sephardic sources—all in 336 pages. Two forces however prevent the book from falling apart at the seams. First, Alcalay quotes brilliantly (an art form in itself), creating a "mosaic" representation very much in harmony with Levantine aesthetics, where the brilliant leap between paradigmatic fragments creates a unified aesthetic field rather than a linear progression like that of the novel or the 3-D painting. Second, like Murphy's book, Alcalay's book is a "tool for liberation," a passionate plea, an example of the very engagement it desires to provoke, a vast seduction. In effect, Alcalay's text proposes a "solution" to the "problem of the Mid East," but it is not yet another totalitarian "analysis"—it is a love poem—impure and palimpsestic—a heaping-up of "utopian traces"—a rag-and-bone bag of great and deeply moving *beauty.* If the text is also saturated with nostalgia—perhaps the impurest of emotions—it's an impurity I share and hence fear to criticize. And besides, by the skillful application of a kind of rough and weirdly baroque Levantine dialectics, Alcalay has constructed something positive out of this nostal-

gia—and in fact, a way out of the nostalgia itself. This is the insurrectionary project he calls the *remaking* of Levantine culture.

If in Alcalay's view, this remaking has already begun, and is reflected in certain works produced in Israel and elsewhere by oriental Jews, Palestinians and other "Levantine types," I would gain little by merely parroting his list of sources and names, or quoting his quotes. My intention is to go out and find the books he praises, many of them translated into English but published obscurely, and acquaint myself more deeply with the newly emerging neo-Levantine culture. Certain Latin American poets gleefully adopted the term *Tropicalismo* for their project, neatly appropriating what might have been a term of colonialist disdain. Perhaps the new Levantines could call their movement *Orientalismo*, thus finally grounding the spooks now so dislodged by Professor Said. With deference to Said's accurate analysis of Orientalism as imperialist "science," we should recall that the word "orient" means something in the East as well, something quite different. The false romanticism of orientalism should not be juxtaposed only to some ideal of the "real" orient, whose "real essence" must remain unknown to the (ideal) "West." It must also be compared with an authentic *oriental romanticism* and of an "East" which created the ideal of "romantic love." and the literary form of the "romance" (which have nothing to do with Rome!). The *East* is as much an imaginal construct for the Orient as it is for the Occident—but in a different way. The East knows itself as *mashruq*, the space of illumination:—a romanticism of the self, not of the "other." Should we attempt to compare the two forms of romanticism for "truth content"? Would this be a *useful* procedure? Wouldn't it serve a better purpose to point out that orientalism can overcome its own malignancy—which is often unconscious and socially determined. The late Henry Corbin—the philosopher-orientalist of the *mundus imaginalis* and of the "Orient of Light"—has been perhaps as influential in the East as in the West, because he "got inside" oriental romanticism, the East's view of itself as the "Orient." Scientific "realism"—with its aggressive program of disenchantment and reductionism—makes a poor substitute for old-fashioned orientalism even at its worst. Nostalgia for an imaginary past, whether indulged in by Western orientalists or anti-Western Orientals, must always lose the struggle against disenchantment, against "the real" as a form of *disappointment.* But a living culture requires its own form of romanticism—and the rebirth of Levantine culture requires it more than others. True romanticism is the struggle against false realism, the realism which can only devalue, deconstruct, destroy. And true realism—calling things by their own names—is the struggle against false romanticism, which consists of the deployment of masks and endless sacrifices to the illusory Ideal. This, in a word, is Alcalay's Levantine dialectics—and the result is the remaking of Levantine culture.

After Jews and Arabs follows—as one among many themes—the history of actual friendship, respect, mutual enhancement, partnership, influence (intellectual and artistic) and even love between Jew and Arab. Alcalay's quotations and anecdotes could be multiplied endlessly by anyone who knew "Old Jerusalem" or the old Levant, or even anyone who knows modern Morocco. This legacy, which is no mere epiphenomenon, is *not dead*, despite the premature celebrations, eulogies, laments or other burial-rites—including even some indulged in by Alcalay himself. Just as Hindu-Moslem amity was harmed by Partition, but not eradicated, so also with Arab-Jewish "harmonious tension." Alcalay shows us a way to be true philosemites:—pro-Jewish and pro-Arab—pro-Israel and pro-Palestine (as an anarchist I am of course referring to the Israeli and Palestinian people, not to their governments)—revolutionaries for love, for "romanticism," for *beauty*. Death can't win every time—and when the demands of life are heard (even if only "in heaven"), Alcalay's book will be read into the record.

—PETER LAMBORN WILSON

Theodor W. Adorno, *Notes to Literature*. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen. New York: Columbia University Press. Volume one, 1991 ($35 hb/$15 pb); Volume two, 1992 ($39 hb/$15.50 pb)

Rarely has a writer so acutely plumbed philosophy's relationship to literary creation as in the essays and near-fragments of the "immanent" or dialectical criticism collected in Adorno's *Notes to Literature*, most of its components only at this late date reaching an English audience. For Adorno, the part and the whole, the singular and the universal, intuition and the concept are united in the semblance of philosophy and art, crystallized or monadological forms that allow true cognitive models to function, and from this arena, Adorno wrote in *Minima Moralia*, "cognition has no light to see but that which shines down onto the world from redemption." This theme of the necessary if shut down utopia is relentless in the *Notes to Literature*, shining through even, or especially, in Valéry's "pure poetry" or Beckett's monosyllabic bums. *Notes to Literature* stands as

a kind of antimonument to Adorno's knotty, exacting type of insight in which "only what does not fit into this world is true."

Paradoxically a by-principle anti-systematic philosopher who could wryly note that the word "Progress" was missing from the authoritative Hermann Glockner lexicon of Hegel (in "Bibliographical Musings"), in the *Notes to Literature* Adorno's unique if not perverse use of that German philosopher is everywhere in evidence, a "miraculous weapon" that shoehorns the qualities of resistance or "reconciliation" out of the most obdurate texts. For Adorno, it would appear, Hegel may be the more revolutionary thinker in comparison with Marx, if he is subjected to Adorno's own "negative thinking" or "negative dialectics" that borders on a deconstruction. As his translator Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jeremy J. Schapiro noted in their introduction to Adorno's *Hegel: Three Studies* (MIT Press, 1993), Adorno can only be understood if one grasps that his "negative dialectics" as a mode of unifying theory and practice, experience, thought and sensibility, is also "a lesson in negative experience" as well. Adorno's work, particularly in his aesthetic writings, is an "ensemble" of practice and experience and the insights gleaned from an imminently concrete and contingent reading of Hegel's dialectic. In Adorno's view, Hegel can be most "correct" when he is at his most ideological—his notion that the real is rational in the *Philosophy of Right,* for instance, becomes an accurate prophecy of the infinitely totalized world, the "administered reality" in which we now live. Hegel prefigures the "negative whole" or "antagonistic totality." Adorno writes in *Hegel* that

> One of the most remarkable aspects of Hegel's accomplishment is that he inferred that systematic character of society from the concept long before it could gain ascendancy in the sphere of Hegel's own experience, that of a Germany far behind in its bourgeois development. A world integrated through "production," through the exchange relationship, depends in all its moments on the social conditions of its production, and in that sense actually realizes the primacy of the whole over its parts; in this regard the desperate impotence of every single individual now verifies Hegel's extravagant conception of the system. . .Even the being-for-something-else that is the official justification for the existence of all commodities is only secondary to production. The very world in which nothing exists for its own sake is also a world of unleashed production that forgets its human aims. The self-forgetfulness of production, the insatiable and destructive expansive principle of the exchange society, is reflected in Hegelian metaphysics. It describes the way the world actually

> is, not in historical perspective but in essence, without creating any blue smoke in the process with the question of authenticity.

In this reading Hegel's false reconciliation with the Prussian state, this self-contradictory stopping of the dialectic, is still utopia deferred, his "logic" the social labor, working itself through, of society—"The ray of light that reveals the whole to be untrue in all its moments is none other than utopia, the utopia of the whole truth, which is still to be realized."

What Adorno has to say about Hegel is inescapable since it is the scalpel that elucidates the play of meaning that emerges from subject and object, the mediated and unmediated, the utopian yearnings of Hölderlin's late hymns, the "happiness" of Proust, or the "extorted reconciliation" of Georg Lukacs' *Realism in Our Time*. When Adorno writes about Hegel's style, he could be explaining his own:

> No doubt Hegel's style goes against customary philosophical understanding, yet in his weakness he paves the way for a different kind of understanding; one must read Hegel by describing along with him the curves of his intellectual movement, by playing his ideas with the speculative ear as though they were musical notes. Philosophy as a whole is allied with art in wanting to rescue, in the medium of the concept, the mimesis that the concept represses.

Hegel has to be read, Adorno maintained, "against the grain, and in such a way that every logical operation, however formal it seems to be, is reduced to the experiential core. The equivalent experience in the reader is the [productive] imagination." What Adorno elsewhere called the "logicity" of the work of art requires the viewer or reader to follow along, to "imitate" or "co-execute"; the most adequate illustration of this situation is listening to music, hence the musical title, "notes to" rather than "notes on" literature. Adorno tries to remain faithful to his own credo in the essay "Presuppositions," that "One does not understand a work of art when one translates it into concepts—if one simply does that, one misunderstands the work from the outset—but rather one is immersed in its immanent movement; I should almost say, when it is recomposed by the ear in accordance with its own logic, repainted by the eye, when the linguistic sensorium sings along with it."

These concerns—language's evocation of "mimesis" or the nonidentical, as well as conveying discursive logic or clarity, replicating dialectical movement in its very style of exposition—evidenced throughout the collection of the *Notes*, show again how close Adorno was to his cohort

Walter Benjamin. The *Notes to Literature* seem to validate the observation of Albrecht Wellmer about Adorno's other aesthetic writings, that "even within the limited medium of a philosophical dialectic of subject and object," Adorno was able "to express, or at least to intimate, much that is actually restraint to presentation in that medium."

Just as Adorno's peculiar version of the dialectic could be fierce—he wrote of Benjamin's suicide in "Benjamin the Letter Writer" that "Only by sacrificing life did Benjamin become the spirit that lived by the idea of a way of life without victims"—it could yield up uncanny insights like that in the extraordinary essay on Hölderlin ("Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry"), where Adorno claims the poet's constructions that show up the inconclusiveness of "synthetic language" in his extensive piling on of meaning, in a parataxis that assaults syntax syntactically as Hegel used logic to assault logic, serves as a forerunner to Beckett. Hölderlin's late poetry fulfills to an enormous extent a poetic parallel for Adorno with Hegel's sentences, "in paradoxical contradiction to his systematic intent, in its form increasingly evades the constraints of construction the more it surrenders without reservation to the program of 'simply looking on' outlined in the introduction to the *Phenomenology* and the more logic becomes history for it." In Hölderlin's poetry he presents a linguistic "unity" that "indicates that it knows itself to be inconclusive," in his revolt against the "logical coercion to which the expression of the subject is subjected" and in the concomitant "sacrifice of the period" he not only reveals the double aspect or character of language, he loosens or disconnects language from subjectivization. Hölderlin realizes subjective intention exists only though language, and so in his late work what Adorno calls his "incalculably portentous change in linguistic gesture" where language, amputated from the subject, speaks for the subject, which can no longer speak for itself. Thus Hölderlin creates a kind of romantic "objectivism" of language that both eschews the notion of an unmediated myth and attempts a faltering ideal language. In chunks of "revealed language," always distanced from theology, what Walter Benjamin called a "naked rock" which is "everywhere exposed," are what Adorno terms an "intentionless language," a procedure that leads straight, in time, to Samuel Beckett's "protocol sentences, empty of meaning."

Proceeding from a singular "immanent criticism" that was the result of a "rescue," not "revival" of Hegel, Adorno can pick unlikely subjects as exemplars of the shining light of redemption. Contrary to the famous, near-savage attack on Brecht in the essay "Commitment," Adorno in "Valéry's Deviations" and "The Artist as Deputy" finds the apostle of "pure poetry" far more congenial. Writing of Valéry in 1960, Adorno claims "The ability to see works of art from the inside, in their logic as artifacts, things that have been produced—a union of action and reflection that neither hides behind naiveté nor hastily dissolves its concrete characteristics in a general

concept—is probably the only form in which aesthetics is still possible." "It proves its worth," Adorno continues, "in the fact that Valéry's formulations are scarcely vulnerable to any critique but one that continues their line of thought." In an earlier essay, Adorno argues that Valéry's project maintains "It is better to be ruined attempting the impossible"—"It is no accident that he cites enthusiastically a statement of Degas opposing resignation." Yet Valéry's art—"tightly organized, seamless, and rendered completely sensory precisely through its conscious force—is hardly capable of realization." For Adorno, however Valéry's work

> embodies a resistance to the unspeakable pressure exerted on what is human by what merely exists. It acts as the representative of what we might one day be. Not to become stupid, not to be lulled to sleep, not to go along: these are the social stances sedimented in Valéry's work, a work which refuses to play the game of false humanness, of social complicity with the denigration of the human being. For him, to construct works of art means to refuse the opiate that great sensuous art has become since Wagner, Baudelaire, and Manet; to fend off the humiliation that makes works of art media and makes consumers victims of psychotechnical manipulation.

Despite his own opinions, (Adorno elsewhere notes Valéry's books "are not lacking in frankly reactionary material"), Valéry is also a figure for "reconciliation" through (due to the *ascesis* of the anti-expressionist poet's dedication, absorption in and surrender to the demands of his art) his enactment of the "total social subject, of the whole, undivided human being which Valéry's idea of the beautiful invokes. . .The art that achieved self-awareness as a consequence of Valéry's conception would transcend art itself and fulfill itself in the true life of human beings."

It is against the background of these stringent criteria, not only for a work of art, but for the viability of individual insight and activity, however impoverished or slim, or seemingly impossible under conditions of contemporary late capitalist life, that a few have begun to argue for Adorno's renewed relevance. It can be forgotten, in the midst of some of Adorno's more pessimistic broadsides, that his critique of the subject ("the self-positing subject is an illusion and at the same time historically very real") is based on, and is only possible, given the ultimate "reconciliation" that he hammers through most of the *Notes to Literature*. Most commentaries on Adorno stress his "primacy of the object" and near neglect of subjectivity and reception that are nevertheless an integral and crucial ingredient of his views on literature and aesthetics. Others, perhaps most significantly Fredric Jameson in *Late Marxism* (Verso, 1990), have con-

cluded that Adorno's "moment" is more properly the 1990s than his own lifetime, given his conceptualization of the "antagonistic totality" and of social relationships, nature and the Unconscious completely dominated by a commodity-capitalism that is now far more entrenched and globally reaching than in his own day. "There is some chance," Jameson wrote, "that he may turn out to have been the analyst of our own period, which he did not live to see;" if in previous periods Adorno's thought was "no great help," Jameson suggests it "may turn out to be just what we need today." *Notes to Literature* remain evidence of the arduous labor involved in a social, or "immanent" reading of art (Adorno despised the term "texts"), and if Hegel's *Logic* may rarely again be offered to illuminate Proust, we can still gather what Benjamin called "remembrance" for the glinting of light that emanates from Adorno's own essays, that, as Edward Said remarked, "are not simply criticism, they are literature." Adorno's reception hangs as precariously in the balance as any diagnosis of human freedom must. To summon Adorno's own fate, perhaps the crack of Karl Kraus that Adorno used in the conclusion of his fecund foray into Ernst Bloch's *Spuren* is most appropriate—"Nothing is true, and it is possible that something else will happen."

—JAY MURPHY

Notes on Some 18th-Century French Revivals, Mostly Libertine

I adore Paris, a city where I've spent nearly half my adult life; I revere Baudelaire: and I continue to reread Walter Benjamin, one of the finest theorists of our century. Yet Baudelaire's vision of Paris is hardly the only one. Unfortunately, the newfound "political correctness" of Benjamin has added to his academic prestige, which has transformed his work into something of a stereotype, a readymade theory, an obligatory reference (always read the footnotes first). Thus Baudelaire's Paris, via Benjamin, has come to constitute the major intellectual and imaginary horizon of that city. The academic machine of collective justification, validation, imitation and appropriation has taken its customary toll.

In his unfinished magnum opus on the arcades of Paris, Benjamin himself indicates the wealth of writings which may help us understand the

phenomenon of the Parisian *flaneur*. Writing of the knowledge gained during the "anamnestic drunkenness" of these strolls, he explains: "But in the course of the 19th century such knowledge was also set forth in a nearly infinite number of works. Even before Lefeuve, who described Paris 'street by street, house by house,' one never ceased to paint the decor of this landscape for the idle dreamer. The study of these books constituted a second existence already completely prepared for reverie, and what they taught took form and figure in the afternoon promenade before the aperitif."

It would take a monumental paradigm shift to create the discursive space for different views of Paris. That moment seems to have arrived, for the long-awaited volumes of Louis Sébastien Mercier's *Tableau de Paris* (1781-1789) has appeared in a critical edition (totaling 4000 pages), directed by Jean-Claude Bonnet and published by Mercure de France. Mercier was a humanitarian idealist writing during revolutionary and post-revolutionary Paris; though a prolific and successful, albeit minor, novelist and playwright, his journalistic work (collected in *Le tableau de Paris* and *Le nouveau tableau de Paris)* provides the broadest and most detailed picture of Paris in the immediately pre-industrial epoch. The republication of these works—along with an accompanying volume containing essays by Jean-Claude Bonnet, Pierre Frantz, Philippe Roger, Chantal Thomas, and Anthony Vidler, among others—will provide a panoramic view of a Paris in perpetual transformation, offering a profound corrective to the brilliant but nevertheless limited perspective of a Paris which has become all-too-Baudelairian. Perhaps next, during our own fin-de-siècle, we will be offered the possibility of rediscovering the Paris of the 19th century decadents. . .

Chantal Thomas' first book, *Sade, l'oeil de la lettre* (1978) inaugurated her libertine trajectory of studies traversing the works of Casanova, Marie-Antoinette, the Prince de Ligne and Choderlos de Laclos. These are now followed by another volume on the topic, *Sade,* published by Le Seuil in the revival of their series, Les Écrivains de Toujours. This work offers a fine counterpoint to *Le tableau de Paris,* insofar as Sade—given his passion for the theater, prodigal libertinage, aristocratic sensibility, and literary genius—constitutes the antithesis of Mercier's project. Chantal Thomas' *Sade* is not that of contemporary philosophically oriented criticism stemming from the *Tel Quel* years, where Sade was taken as a major precursor to modernist theories of excess, transgression, abjectness, antihumanism, pathological cruelty, encyclopedic epistemophilia, antilyricism, extreme eroticism—in short, a prelude to Bataille, Klossowski, Foucault, Deleuze. Rather, Chantal Thomas' consideration of Sade focuses on the sensually libertine, profoundly theatrical, and subtly literary aspects of his work. Our fascination with Sade-the-thinker has finally received the complimentary

appreciation of Sade-the-writer. This certainly warrants a rereading, at the very moment that Sade has received a major new biography written by Maurice Lever; an important textual supplement in the publication, edited by Lever, of the correspondence of the Comte de Sade, the famous Marquis' father; and the "consecration" of Sade by his entry into Gallimard's *Pléiade*.

To the extent that a relatively unknown masterpiece may exist, Jacques Cazotte's *Le diable amoreux* (Baudelaire's favorite book) would certainly fall into that category. This book, published in 1772, is the tale of the devil who is summoned up by a young man, only to fall in love with that man. The devil transforms himself into a beautiful woman, Biondetta, in order to carry out the seduction—leading to delicious erotic and sentimental complications and paradoxes. This work was to gain Cazotte notoriety, especially among the *Illuminés*, which couldn't have helped his case, for he was to die by the guillotine during the Terror. Perhaps the reason for the neglect of Cazotte's marvelous fabulation was his royalism, mysticism, and anti-Enlightenment beliefs. In any case, this privation is finally rectified by the forthcoming publication of Stephen Sartarelli's fine translation in a Marsilio Publishers edition, which will also include the chapter on Cazotte from Gérard de Nerval's *Les illuminés*.

Yet another mystery of publishing mores was the continued unavailability in translation of Diderot's scandalous erotic novel, *Les bijoux indiscrets* (1748), a title of such fame that it needs no introduction. This has just appeared as *The Indiscreet Jewels*, translated by Sophie Hawkes, introduced by Aram Vartanian, and published by Marsilio—a text both obligatory and pleasurable.

To remain on the theme of libertinage, Jean-François Bastide's *La petite maison* will be published this year by Princeton Architectural Press, translated and introduced by Rodolphe El-Khoury. Though the tale is a rather formulaic story of a gallant seduction, the book is of great interest for its wealth of architectural detail. The true source of charm and temptation in this tale is a *maison de plaisance* located in the outskirts of Paris, with its paintings, furniture and decor, all meticulously described. Here, the systematic seduction of the five senses is accomplished more by the finely conceived and crafted environment than by the seducer himself. Narrative and description become one in a rare tale revealing the architectural manifestations of desire.

Somewhat weary as I am of continually acting as the herald (and too often the apologist) of Art Brut, I nevertheless wish to conclude this brief survey with mention of Jacqueline Porret-Forel's *Aloïse et le théâtre de l'univers*, published by Skira. I don't want to give the impression of sophistry in this segué, but I might justify the presence of Aloïse Corbaz in these Noticings by the reminder that this great Art Brut creator existed, in one of her many reincarnations, as Marie-Antoinette. Dr. Porret-Forel (who

regularly visited Aloïse in the psychiatric hospital where the latter spent the last 46 years of her life) was the author of the *Fascicule de l'Art Brut* #7 (1966) devoted to Aloïse, and has now published a lavishly illustrated and beautifully written book on the artist whom Jean Dubuffet qualified, though perhaps with some of his usual hyperbole, as, "the only truly resplendent manifestation in painting of the truly feminine pulsation," and of whom Michel Nedjar said, "If Aloïse is accepted as an artist, then everything is permitted. During many, many years, Aloïse guided my steps . . .And during my ten years of travel, Aloïse was with me—the goal of my voyage was Aloïse. It was a bomb, a bomb inside me, in my head." We should all be so fortunate in discovering our personal muse.

—ALLEN S. WEISS

MELVILLE AND FREUD (LUCIEN, THAT IS)

In *Moby-Dick* Melville devotes an entire chapter to "The Whiteness of the Whale," meditating on the "elusive something in the innermost idea of this hue." "It was the whiteness of the whale that above all things appalled me," says Ishmael.

In her recent study, forthcoming from the Johns Hopkins University Press, "Strike through the mask: Herman Melville and the Scene of Writing," Elizabeth Renker carries this notion—the overpowering force of whiteness—a step further: in discussing Pierre, the protagonist of the novel of that name, and stand-in for much of Melville, she writes, "Pierre's attempts to dive deeply are brought up short against the 'lurking' force associated here and elsewhere in Melville's work with the written page." "The whiteness that surfaces here in such overwhelming force is the whiteness of the page that overpowers the writing arm. . ."

Renker makes further associations between the virginal, blank paper and what Melville conceives as the facelessness of the white whale. "Physiognomically regarded, the Sperm Whale is an anomalous creature," Ishmael writes. "For you see no one point precisely; not one distinct feature is revealed; no nose, eyes, ears, or mouth; no face; he has none, proper . . ." Later: "But if I know not even the tail of this whale, how understand his head? much more, how comprehend his face, when face he has none? Thou shalt see my back parts, my tail, he seems to say, but my face shall

not be seen. But I cannot completely make out his back parts; and hint what we will about his face, I say again he has no face."

This faceless white face is the mask through which Ahab is driven to strike. And it is the unmarked white paper facing the writer Melville, challenging him to attack. It is perhaps, also, the pale northern faces of his three unmarried sisters, who shared the household at Arrowhead, and who toiled at making fair copies of the author's chaotic manuscripts.

* * *

Although Melville—the consummate autodidact—was well versed in his European cultural background, the Judeo-Christian tradition, he added a particularly American quality: the muscular, the physical. This is reflected in the agonies he suffered in the act of writing.

Renker: "Physically, too, writing was a struggle for Herman: his handwriting was illegible; he found spelling impossible; and, among other ailments, he suffered from eye, back, and head trouble that made the activity painful. . . . The physical engagement with the written page that threatened Herman in such a profoundly physical sense was in fact a violent one: he disfigured the surface of his writing paper, filling up every available white space with writing as well as cross-outs, revisions, carets, circles, and other manipulations. He cut pages apart and pinned passages together; he wrote on both sides of the page; he turned the paper upside-down and wrote some more. . . . When he was writing at white heat, his hand became increasingly rough and more and more abbreviated and elided."

Melville battled the act of writing while engaged in it.

He directed that his sisters, in making fair copies, omit all punctuation. He would add that later. Punctuating. Puncturing. Stabbing.

The writing hand was the mutilating hand. Like an on-deck whale butchering.

* * *

Melville plunged the act and method of writing into the substance of what he wrote. Something comparable happened when, first Cezanne, then Picasso and Braque, then the Abstract Expressionists, broke up the surface of the canvas, making the painting both in and on it.

It can be argued that Melville's career as a writer was destined to fail, he simply could not be understood—until these painters had opened the door for him. When painting passed from representational to abstract, a recognizable face was erased. The canvas became faceless—with a new language of hieroglyphics.

Melville covered the page with writing, so as to obliterate all white space.

He used colored pencils for editing.

The manuscript was an object to him, as much so as is the canvas to the painter.

* * *

Anyone who knows the work of the painter Lucien Freud is aware that he is a grandson of Sigmund. This needs to be stated, simply to clear the deck; but not much more needs to be made of it.

Perhaps the best way to approach him is through his severest critic, the man who least understands him: Hilton Kramer. From "The Other Freud," by Hilton Kramer (Art & Antiques, January, 1994): "It was the show that everyone in London was talking about and, it seemed, writing about. Professional duty therefore obliged me to have a look at it. So I steeled myself for the inevitable shudder, and went along to see what, if any, modification might have occurred in the old trickster's ill-mannered way of applying paint to canvas since the last time I had been in his presence. . . . Needless to say, there were no surprises. As has commonly been the case in Freud's painting for some years now, there was an abundance of putrescent-looking flesh in many of the recent pictures. Whether single figures or couples whether in situations suggesting erotic engagement or simply patient endurance of the painter's protracted inspection, the naked bodies in Freud's paintings are placed within the canvas rectangle in a way that maximizes the indelicacy of their postures. . ."

Indelicacy, indeed.

Kramer speaks of "the aroma of the illicit and perverse," "the invariably ugly and unloving way the paint is laid on," "this transparent appeal to prurient interests," and "the artist's fixation on gay male subjects."

That's a cheap shot, Mr. Kramer. The catalogue of the current show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Lucien Freud: Recent Work, by Catherine Lampert, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 1993) contains reproductions of 31 nudes. 17 are female, 14 male. When it comes to human flesh—our animal-human flesh—Freud is an equal-opportunity misanthrope, gender unspecific.

And there are many other paintings with subjects of all ages, fully clothed.

The prurience, it would seem—or at least the nervousness—is not in Mr. Freud.

Finally, Kramer states that "the representation of sexuality in Freud's work—a view at once uninhibited and morose, completely free and excessively gloomy—speaks to the spirit of our time."

I tend to be suspicious of critics who claim a personal access to "the spirit of our time."

* * *

Catherine Lampert is a much more favorable critic: ". . .Freud's work will leave to posterity the vulnerability and potency of the people portrayed, in the manner of Rembrandt and Degas." One is reminded, too, of the photographer Diane Arbus; how the viewer of her photographs is driven to meditate on the potency of the rapport that has been established between the artist and her often bizarre subjects.

Like Melville, Freud had little formal education. Or such as he had meant little to him. And like Melville, Freud served at sea as a common sailor. He felt comfortable with his fellow sailors. Ashore, he stayed away from "neighborhoods that usually accommodated artists and intellectuals;" instead, he occupied waterfront flats, among "costermongers, villains and thieves."

* * *

Freud once met Picasso, and "admired his malevolence." Cubism, however, and the later abstractions, were not his mode. Instead, he attacked the flesh. Lampert quotes him: "I want paint to *work as flesh*. . .As far as I am concerned the paint is the person. I want it to work for me just as flesh does."

Lampert again: "Many of the strongest qualities of Freud's recent work are those he shares with sculptors." The layers of flesh transformed, as paint, in three dimensions.

And: "Freud was open to manipulating the compositions and limbs just because of the sensual presence of the models: 'the effect that they make in space is bound up with them as might be their color or smell.'"

I have never seen a Freud painting in the original, I have seen only reproductions. My friend Julio Granda, artist, toured the exhibition at the Met, and he came back with a single strong impression: "You can *smell* them."

The wise men who wrote the Old Testament may have had several meanings in mind when they coined that wonderful phrase, "carnal knowledge."

* * *

The act of butchering a whale is not for the faint of heart. Nor is the act of recording that event—Melville's act as writer. It is not a genteel

procedure. He must attack the awesome white page—stab it, mutilate it, obliterate the white.

Freud attacks the flesh he sees before him. Whether it is a hand, a face, a young woman, an old man, a boy, a girl, even a baby—a penis or a breast—he obliterates the white with all manner of exaggerated color and texture.

None of this is delicate.

* * *

Art and literature provide a field on which an ever-shifting battle is waged: the Army of Inclusion against the Army of Refinement. On the one side, Melville's whale blubber and Freud's human blubber; on the other side, Hilton Kramer and the forces of gentrification.

It's like bread. For years the nobility struggled to produce a refined white bread, suitable to their delicate tastes, and distinct from the coarse black bread of the peasants. Now, the common man in America eats Wonder Bread (like a wet white pillow), while the descendents of the nobility go to the health food store for granola, and the other coarse peasant grains.

As the tides of battle flow today, I'm afraid Mr. Kramer is making a futile Pickett's Charge. The odds are against him.

—PAUL METCALF

Noticings

"With bop behind, we go ahead."

—Jack Kerouac

"Leningrad is probably the best example of the truly peaceful city."

—Glenn Gould, *Toronto*

"you write?. . .you're sunk. . ."

—Louis-Ferdinand Celine, *Castle to Castle*

"What is complete but rests in the momentary illusion."

—Robert Duncan, *After Passage*

"Mysticism has the enormous merit of being concerned with the eternal present, and not, as humanism is, with the future."

—Aldous Huxley, *Huxley in Hollywood*

"The words did not communicate themselves, did not know themselves, playing among themselves according to the limits of near and far and the unknown decisions of difference."

—Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*

After this I think I'll write some poems as plain as toast.

"Death I can take, but not pastness."

—David Meltzer in conversation

"Sometimes the dissatisfaction which leads one to put something away for a few weeks and look at it later is not that the work is unfinished, but the inspiration is unfinished."

—Frank O'Hara, letter to Larry Osgood 8/20/56

Jim Brodey, what you always wanted you found in Kerouac:
the sound of constantly falling onward.

"Sometimes, says Dag, I have a real problem remembering if a celebrity is dead or not. But then I realize it doesn't really matter."

—Douglas Coupland, *Generation X*

"Any race of people that allows itself to be graded on a scale designed by European science will appear to be a culture of higher primates.
Any grading system is meaningless. Every attempt to compare cultures with the intention of determining which is the most developed will never be anything other than one more bullshit projection of western culture's hatred of its own shadows. There is *one* way to understand another culture. *Living* it. Move into it, ask to be tolerated as a guest, learn the language. At some point understanding may come. It will always be wordless. The moment you grasp what is foreign, you will lose the urge to explain it. To explain a phenomenon is to distance yourself from it."

—Peter Hoeg, *Smilla's Sense of Snow*

"Another kind of police will come now."

—Trisha Brown

"She was honest in the only way it's possible to be honest—by not knowing there was any other way to be."

—Rafael Yglesias, *Fearless*

"Whatever gives oxygen its power, music is cut from the same cloth."
—Ornette Coleman

What is more questionable than a dead man?
"Myshkin on the phonograph"
My skin in a photograph?
Zappa is gone, the lame averages won't leave us alone.

"I was getting as hard as Chinese algebra."
—Tom Waits, *Pasties and a G-String*

"I used to like this trick of balancing a small mirror on the bridge of your nose, and walking around on the ceiling, so that you had no feet. You were walking, physically, on the floor, given that you were experiencing location by reference to the ceiling. And it *felt* as though you were walking on the ceiling, you see? Simple."
—Robert Creeley, *Some Senses of the Commonplace*

"The space of poetic language is determined by the time it takes meaning to evaporate."
—Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, *Xenia*

"But if you don't like people whose lives are exceptional, why do you want to hear about them?
Because those are the sorts of stories I like best.
Untrue ones?
No, interminable ones, if you like. Bottomless pits.
Me too, she said."
—Marguerite Duras, *The Sailor from Gibraltar*

"In our dawning, mutual intimacy, I induce him to open the little slit in the head of his penis so I can put my clitoris inside and fuck him."
—Peter Hoeg, *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*

"he catches on right away, he jumps, he settles down, he purrs. . .he isn't just any old cat, he understands our living conditions, I'm sure he knows more than he lets on, even about what's going to happen. . .an animal's silence is something."
—Celine, *Rigadoon*

"the 'messagiers' are a different breed, philosophico-addlepated, heaven help you if you mess with them, if you lose yourself in their waves, urinals,

terraces, abbeys. . .complexes, seaweeds, and complications, you'll never get your bearings again. . ."

—Celine, Ibid

"a compact whole cat complex nerve system
under the lamppost
let alone the moon"

—Larry Eigner, *Windows/Walls/Yard/Ways*

"What I hear is the traffic. Everybody in New York hears it, but it's really vivid in my head. Horns and children and birds too—I hear them so clearly, they hit me so hard. The subway roar, the jackhammers. Not that they're so loud, but they *stay* there. The trucks and the sirens and the screeching and the hollering and the brakes, all that jagged movement, the arggghhhh! Without thinking about it, I relate to that. Invariably, no matter where I am, if I hear a siren and I'm in the middle of playing something, I start to try to do the same thing. It just always happens."

—Charles Gayle, *Wire* interview, March 1994

"Why do we fear the dark as unavoidable defeat when it alone is constant, and we'd starve if it stopped watering the lawn of dreams."

—Rosmarie Waldrop, *Lawn of the Excluded Middle*

"The streets indicate it's the end of the world, finally."

—Anne Waldman, *Iovis*

"a great long lifetime in a briefcase proving my work and my work itself stopped dead at the level where I took to proving myself. . .I quit self promotion, I enter my page."

—Jack Kerouac, letter to Lois Sorrells 6/29/65

Did anybody notice when irony died?

—CLARK COOLIDGE

Bishop, Merrill, Plath, Ginsberg

THE NEW COMPANION VOLUME TO THE
HIGHLY ACCLAIMED *SIX AMERICAN POETS*

EIGHT AMERICAN POETS

AN ANTHOLOGY
EDITED BY JOEL CONARROE

In one elegantly bound edition—generous selections from the major American modernists, the spectacular "second generation" of American poets.

Roethke, Berryman, Sexton, and Lowell

RANDOM HOUSE

MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW

presents a double issue

BRIDGES TO CUBA

edited by Ruth Behar and Juan Leon

Through personal essays and poetry, short fiction and painting, book reviews, interviews, performance pieces, and hybrid creations of text and image, the contributors to these volumes explore the uncertain, sometimes absurd, often tragic encounters of individual lives with the violent, polarized politics of U.S.-Cuban relations.

These authors and artists present the most comprehensive and diverse testimony ever assembled of how Cubans on the island and in the diaspora understand their situation in this very significant decade for Cuba. The double issue celebrates the informal networks that Cubans in the United States and in Cuba have maintained through artistic, academic, family, and other ties that have remained active despite the political division between the two countries. At the same time, locations as diverse as Havana, Matanzas, Miami, New York, and Los Angeles are explored as sites of Cuban cultural production.

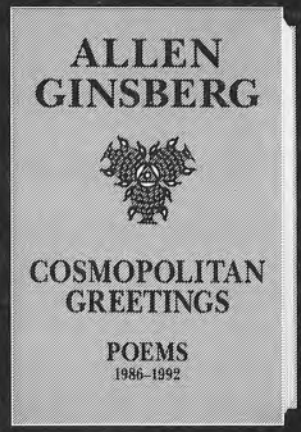
The participants are earnest, angry, witty, and hopeful. They are sometimes visionaries, but they are not deluded about Cuban (or North American) realities. Their voices offer a much-needed testimony to the continuing efforts of Cubans and Cuban-Americans to look beyond the animosities and failings of their respective societies and find possibilities for personal and international reconciliation, dialogue, and renewal.

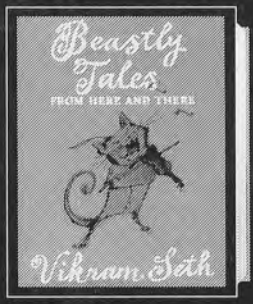
Cuba is one island in the Caribbean, yet its revolution and its cultural predicaments reflect global issues of identity politics, immigration, exile, and the search for new understandings of nationality and homeland. This issue of MQR offers a forum for dialogue about Cuban culture that goes beyond the polarizations of Cold War thinking and opens a window onto general discussions of the geography of identity in our time.

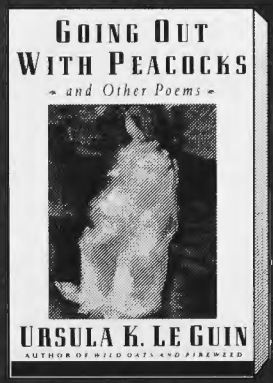
"Bridges to Cuba" is a testament, a meeting place, a showcase, an occasion for new scholarship and imaginative speculation. It represents the hope that new beginnings and new conversations may still be possible.

For the two volumes of "Bridges to Cuba" send a check for $16 (includes postage and handling) to:
Michigan Quarterly Review, 3032 Rackham Building, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1070

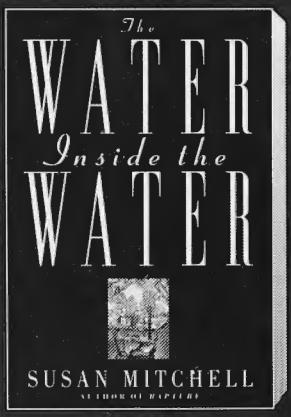
Five poets, countless pleasures.



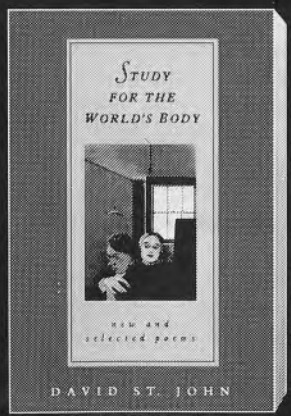




$12.00 paperback



$12.00 paperback



$11.00 paperback

HarperCollins*Publishers*

Antonin Artaud
Paul Auster
Heinrich Böll
John Cage
Italo Calvino
Joseph Cornell
Julio Cortázar
Dennis Hopper
Duong Thu Huong
Kazuo Ishiguro
Jamaica Kincaid
Toni Morrison
Iva Pekárková
Robert Rauschenberg
Edward Ruscha
Edward W. Said
Saul Steinberg
William T. Vollmann
David Foster Wallace
Christa Wolf
Edmund White

"Radical high-class postmodern funk."
—*Allen Ginsberg*

"The freshest, sharpest literary magazine around."
—*Village Voice*

One-year subscription (4 issues) $40. CALL 1-800-807-6548 (toll-free in USA)
or send credit card information or check to:
Grand Street, Subscription Services, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834 USA

UNDER WORLD ARREST

Clayton Eshleman

190 Pages
Paper $13.00 • Hardcover $25.00

In this most ambitious of Eshleman volumes, all of the concerns that have dominated recent books—the art and culture of the Upper Paleolithic, the poetics and politics of the lower body, the collisions and possibilities of male and female sexuality, the engagement with poetic predecessors such as Artaud, Vallejo, Crane and Wright—are remixed in a poetry that must also confront the new realities of a post-Cold War world. Picking up where *Hotel Cro-Magnon* (1989) left off, *Under World Arrest* opens with a series of poems exploring the sources of poetry, beginning with "Short Story," a discursive *ars poetica* in which the poet articulates the need for a "poetry so full of claws / as to tear the reader's face off."

AVAILABLE AT FINE BOOKSTORES EVERYWHERE

BLACK SPARROW PRESS
24 Tenth Street
Santa Rosa, CA 95401
Tel: (707) 579-4011
Fax: (707) 579-0567

BORDERS

BOOKS AND MUSIC®

612 E. Liberty near State
Mon-Thurs 9-10 • Fri-Sat 9-11 • Sun 11-6
668-7652 Books • 668-7100 Music

$9

Barbara Mor: Linguistic Duplex

Gustaf Sobin: Undulant-Oblique

Amy Sillman: Six Gouaches

Robert Duncan: An Essay on,
& Eleven Letters to, Charles Olson

Poetry by Benjamin Friedlander, Gary Snyder,
Heather Ramsdale, Robert Hershon, Lindsay Hill,
Andrew Joron, Gustaf Sobin, Jean-Paul Auxeméry,
Jayne Cortez & Ingeborg Bachmann

Rikki Ducornet: Phosphor in
Dreamland & Six Drawings

Jed Rasula: Gendering the Muse

Reviews and Noticings by Robert Bertholf, Don Byrd,
Ralph Maud, Dan Featherston, Marjorie Perloff,
Forest Gander, Charles Bernstein,
Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Keith Tuma, Jeffrey Blankfort,
Peter Lamborn Wilson, Jay Murphy, Allen Weiss,
Paul Metcalf, & Clark Coolidge